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Picture the Magic: Exploring Black girl identity using photovoice

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PICTURE THE MAGIC: EXPLORING BLACK GIRL IDENTITY USING PHOTOVOICE

By

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By

Leha A. Hawkins

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the loves of my life- there are three of them. Miles, Malaya, and Camille each of you in your own way helped to make this moment possible. I am ever grateful for your patience as I spent time away from you to go to school. Miles, thank you for stepping in to give rides and take on other big brother tasks as needed. You are an amazing young man destined for greatness—leap into it! Malaya and Camille, thanks for listening to me rant about grad school happenings and accompanying me to coffee shops or campus on occasion. Most of all, I want to thank you for inspiring Magic Black Girls. Ladies, remember that if you think you can, then you can—the power is in you! I love all three of you with a passionate heart and am so glad that I was chosen to be your mother. You are the reason I do everything; I want to make this world a better place for you.

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PICTURE THE MAGIC: EXPLORING BLACK GIRL IDENTITY USING PHOTOVOICE

Abstract

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2020

Using a youth-led participatory action inquiry and photovoice methodology, this study investigated the self-perceptions of Black girls in a suburban area of Northern California. The objective of the project was to explore the perspectives and lives of Black girls. It is through gained insight from their lived experiences that we can come to understand their needs and develop approaches to advance their own holistic empowerment. By gathering self-perceptions of Black girls using photovoice, the project aimed to inform youth workers, educators, and youth-serving organizations such as Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute (MBG) on how to meet the needs and cultivate developmental assets among Black girls. Magic Black Girls was conceived to empower young, Black women to create their own space to grow, become personally aware of their own worth, and stand in their own power. The findings of this study indicate a need for positive counterspaces in which Black girls can generate a counter narrative, gain cultural awareness, experience a sense of community, experience joy, and build skills of activist leadership. The developmental tasks of adolescence for Black young people are complicated by the added context of oppression and racial discrimination which makes it essential to recognize and take action to create supportive environment

that nurtures the positive development of Black girls. Further, the findings of this study contended that the use of innovative, holistic youth empowerment strategies are essential in the formation of spaces dedicated to encouraging, enlightening and empowering of young Black girls.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"You may shoot me with your words,
 You may cut me with your eyes,
 You may kill me with your hatefulness,
 But still, like air, I'll rise."
 —Maya Angelou

A Peculiar Legacy

From the early days of slavery in the 17th century, when Africans were commodified as property to be prodded and examined in the same manner as animals, to modern times, the bodies of Black women have been on display for public objectification. Popular media in the United States has traditionally used pejorative and dehumanizing stereotypical beliefs and images to portray African-Americans (hooks, 1981). The images of Black women today often reinforce the archetypal caricatures of the ante-bellum and pre-Civil Rights South, such as the jezebel, mammy, strong matriarch, welfare mother, and video vixen. Much has changed for civil rights of Black women over the course of time; however, in 2020 Black women and girls still suffered the consequences of a distorted narrative the peculiar institution of slavery created. Black women continue to be objectified, marginalized, and cast as an "other," something other than a woman and a human being (Crenshaw, 1989; Harley & Terborg-Penn, 1978; hooks, 1981).

A Personal Call to Action

This dissertation was a youth participatory action research project that sought to support the empowerment of Black girls living with marginalization of their identity. By capturing first-hand knowledge of what it's like to be a Black girl, this inquiry explored how the self-perceptions of Black girls can be used to build empowerment strategies. The vestiges of slavery present themselves in the

current lived experiences of young Black women. Although it has been more than a century since the abolishment of slavery and decades since the Civil Rights Movement, the dehumanizing imagery and narratives of Black women continue in present-day social and institutional settings. There is a constant barrage of biased stereotypes that influence the actions of society and institutions which serve to diminish the inherent “shine” that Black girls, carry within (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 2000). Whether it is being called derogatory names for simply walking in a store, being told that their natural hair does not meet standards for daily school activities, having the police called for sleeping in the common area their own college residence, or being teased for having ample hips and lips, black girls are often the subject of mistreatment and disdain for nothing more than being themselves. Living in a society that serves up a perpetual state of diminishment amid an onslaught of microaggressive behavior, even if one does not hold herself in that light, takes a toll on the body physically and mentally (Harrell, 2000; Hope, Hoggard, & Thomas, 2015). When the popular social narrative about Black women and girls is overwhelmingly negative and normalized, it can open the door to potential discriminatory behavior on an individual and institutional level. When society at large does not value who you are, then it becomes easier to strip you of your humanity and rights. It is painful to constantly see those who are made in my image and likeness be desecrated, dismissed, and downright ignored due to their darker hue.

It pains me even more to think of my own two wonderful daughters, ever plugged-in, and constantly exposed to the detrimental dismissal of their brains and beauty by harmful societal narratives reflected in popular media. My girls and your

girls, too, serve as my motivation to teach the next generation to harness their own power to make a difference in the world. Since before their birth, I have told them how intelligent, beautiful, and wonderful they are. I read books and played music for them while they were gently rocked in my womb. I told them of all the wonderful places they would go and things they could be. I continued to sustain them with my love and teach them a love of self through their infancy and toddler years. I loved them, at times, more than I loved myself. The task of loving them and keeping them aware of the spark of magic glowing within has become so very challenging as they grow into young women.

The challenge lies in the fact that I cannot fully shield them from a world that loves *what* we offer as the fruit of our labor and talent, but not *who* we are. Adopting our cultural contributions while condemning our identity can leave us feeling empty and undesired. This has led me to have very frank conversations with my children about the state of the world and what it means to exist as a human being who dons Black skin in a society that tends to value labels more than souls. I encourage their love of self and actively foster their many forms of self-expression. The adolescence years are full of a growing self-awareness that they gain through constant comparison of themselves to others. It is the most challenging when I see their insecurities and self-doubt increase because they have become aware of mistreatment based something that it not under anyone's control—the color of their skin. I have come to realize that while I can no longer kiss away their pain, I can arm them with the tools they need to stand up to the negativity.

Holding the Space for Black Girl Magic

It is from my feelings of disillusionment and a desire to make positive change for my own children and yours that Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute was born. It became clear to me that the make-believe healing of mommy kisses may no longer be enough to erase this new type of psychological pain, but that each of our souls received a divine kiss that marked us as magic from day one. The idea of Black women and girls possessing magic speaks to an essence that transcends words, a powerful knowing. It is a way of being that carries Black women and girls, allowing them to still rise amidst the chaotic world that paints an adverse picture of their existence. It is this magic that I desire my girls, your girls, and our girls to tap into for themselves. I recognize that if my own super smart, talented, and athletic beauties need this, then surely there must be other Black girls who could use a tool that empowers and teaches them to counteract stereotypes. With this in mind, we hold a space for our girls—we hold a space for *Black Girl Magic*.

Black Girl Magic. More than just the latest colloquialism to go viral in the world of popular and social media, *Black Girl Magic* has served as a rallying cry for Black women worldwide. The positive connotation of the phrase has drawn much attention and wide usage as a term of endearment, symbol of resilience, and mark of excellence. *Black Girl Magic* is a celebration of the divine essence that exists in all Black girls from birth. It is a special quality that has carried us through challenges to our existence and humanity to become powerful women that affect social change (Wilson, 2016). Owning one's magic is not a claim to be supernatural or non-human. On the contrary, when a Black woman taps into her magic, she lays claim to her connection to the Divine energy that connects us all (Ford, 2016).

When she is aware and fully connected, she knows her worth and stands in her own power—her own *Black Girl Magic*

Magic Black Girls. I created an organization dedicated to holding the space for *Black Girl Magic*. Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute, also known as Magic Black Girls, is a nonprofit youth development program conceived as a space to empower young Black women to become personally aware of their own worth and stand in their own power. Established in 2017, Magic Black Girls was created from a personal need to address the greater societal issues faced by young Black women. The overall purpose is to support their learning to confront and change the negative perceptions and experiences of their racial identity. Distinguishing itself from more traditional youth development programs, Magic Black Girls centers on sharing power with girls as equal partners in the creation and implementation of organizational objectives. Young women who participate in Magic Black Girls serve in meaningful leadership roles that are determined based on the needs they express and those identified from on-going research such as this dissertation. Adults and young people share roles on the governing board and volunteer committees, and they lead programmatic activities together. The advancement of Magic Black Girls depends on understanding the experiences of the young women it seeks to serve in order to provide programming that meets their needs. In order to help girls acquire the leadership skills that allow them to drive the direction of the organization, Magic Black Girls must create a space that supports their personal growth. "Spaces created for and about black girls are integral to black girl empowerment" (Lindsey, 2013, p. 31). In this space, adults and girls can work collectively to bolster the empowerment of Black adolescent girls.

Background

Adolescence is characterized as a phase of development where young people come into their own power, and are tasked with becoming increasingly autonomous, understanding their identity, taking on responsibility, and developing a sense of morality. The acquired habits, skills, and choices of adolescence shape the trajectory of young people's future. In addition to the social-cultural growth required of adolescents, there are many biological and psychological changes that occur that influence the personal development of young people (Brody et al., 2014; Erickson, 1968; Lerner & Thompson, 2002). Adolescence is generally considered a challenging time for most young people because of the task of coping with a host of changes that are occurring simultaneously within themselves and their environment. Already facing the task of forming their identity and transitioning into adult responsibilities, Black adolescents face additional challenges because of the lingering effects of slavery stereotypes and systems of institutionalized oppression (Brody et al., 2014; Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hillfinger, Messias, & McLoughlin, K., 2006; Hope et al., 2015).

For young Black people, the tasks of adolescent development are embedded in a systematic and institutional racially oppressive environment. Young Black people experience interpersonal and institutional discrimination such as residential segregation and aggressive policing and microaggression, (indirect, subtle discrimination against marginalized groups) that complicate normative developmental tasks (Hope et al., 2015). As young Black people establish their personal identities, values, and beliefs, their personal awareness and consciousness is influenced by their experiences, including those that are discriminatory in nature.

When those experiences are plagued with racial discrimination, there can be biological and psychological consequences for young Black people that further confound the complexity of adolescence and become obstacles to healthy development (Brody et al, 2014; Hope et al., 2015).

Problem of Practice

Obstructions to Healthy Development

Unjust acts of discrimination are barriers to the healthy development of Black youth (hooks, 1981; Hope et al., 2015; Jerrigan, 2009). Negative attitudes and beliefs toward Black youth are deeply embedded in the culture and institutions of our society, and persistent discrimination exists at institutional levels even when the levels of individual prejudice and discrimination fall. These institutionalized and canonized negative stereotypes are so deep-seated in mainstream culture that they can lead to failure of people to recognize the perpetuation of prejudice as such behavior becomes normalized and not seen as discrimination (Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Racial discrimination has been associated with increasing the allostatic load, or wear and tear on biological systems. When people are targeted by discriminatory behavior their perceptions of injustice can become a stressor (Brody et al., 2014; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Among the major causes of death, such as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, homicide, stroke, liver cirrhosis, and cancer, Blacks have higher death rates than Whites (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2017). Despite the disparities across all major health risk factors for Blacks, there has been little empirical investigation to understand the role of race as a determinant in these disparities (Bridge et al., 2018; Steele, 1997). Risk factors such as the chronic stress of facing overt and

covert racial bias leads to periods of elevated stress response and negative health outcomes such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and hormonal irregularities (Brody et al., 2014; Williams & Mohammed, 2009).

Prolonged stress responses have been linked to increased rates of disease and premature death. Not only is the experience of biased incidents problematic, but being in a state of worry or anticipation of further discriminatory acts also leads to ongoing stress, which may affect mental health resulting in depression, suicide, violence, and substance abuse (Brody et al, 2014; Hill Collins, 2000; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Internalized cultural stereotypes and negative imagery create a set of expectations and reactions that can have a negative effect on the mental health of Black young people. Steele's (1997) research indicated that internalizing stereotypes can lead to a stigma of inferiority that results in a poor sense of self-efficacy. In the experimental investigation, participants were given an examination, but prior to the exam were fed stereotypes based on race. Black participants were told Black people scored less than Whites on the exam, and women were told that men did better than women. Highlighting the idea that internalized beliefs can influence self-efficacy and performance, all groups had lower scores than did control groups who were not given stereotypes (Steele, 1997).

Adultification

Compounding the increased risk for disease and premature mortality, young Black people must deal with the additional experiences of racial bias such as perceiving of Black children as more adult than their age, or adultification. Ground-breaking research by Epstein, Blake, and González (2017) revealed that young Black people are perceived to behave in a more adult-like manner than their peers.

The study of 325 adults from across the United States aimed to determine whether adults assigned Black girls qualities associated with adults. The surveyed participants, which were primarily White (74%), were randomly asked questions about their perceptions of White and Black girls at different ages, and Black girls were more likely to be viewed as older than their stated age. Respondents saw Black girls across all age groups as more knowledgeable about topics like sex and considered them more likely to take on adult responsibilities than what would have been expected at their age. The adultification of Black girls has led to more severe treatment of Black girls than their White counterparts in public systems such as schools and criminal justice. This translates into it being more likely that Black girls are seen by those in authority as having less of a need for care and protection. The study further suggested that this perception of Black girls as being less innocent may result in harsher punishment and penalties by educators, law enforcement, and the juvenile court. The adultification of Black children dehumanizes and robs them of the very essence of childhood, which is innocence. The theft of childhood creates a “false narrative that Black youths’ transgressions are intentional and malicious, instead of the result of immature decision-making—a key characteristic of childhood” (Epstein et al., 2017, p. 6).

Loss of innocence. Black youth who are stereotyped as more adult like do not receive the opportunity to pass through childhood and adolescence with room for mistakes. Paraschandola (2012) provided a strong example of the problems with adultification by recounting the tale of a 15-year-old Black girl who was arrested by New York police for using a transportation card intended for youth younger than 19. Officers did not believe her age, even when verified by her

parents via telephone, and required them to bring her birth certificate to the police station. The young woman had to be treated at the hospital for damage to her wrists caused by the handcuffs which were left on tightly during the entire ordeal. The adultification of Black girls is not limited to the justice system but is a common occurrence in education as well.

Nationwide, Black girls are suspended at a higher rate than their White peers in every state, with the average rate being 5.5 times higher (American Bar Association [ABA], 2016; ACLU, 2014; Williams Crenshaw, Ocen & Nanda, (2015). In California, Black girls are 4.6 times more likely to be suspended. In Sacramento County where Black students make up approximately 12% of the school enrollment population, they are suspended at a rate of 30%. In comparison, White students make up 29.5% of school enrollment and are suspended at the rate of 21.2% (CDE, 2019). The disproportionate rates of disciplinary action can be attributed to practices rooted in implicit and explicit bias that leads to adultification, causing educators to criminalize young Black people, finding them culpable for their immature behavior unlike their peers who are given the benefit of the doubt and less extreme consequences for youthful mistakes (Epstein et al., 2017).

Adultification is a precursor to the school-to-prison pipeline. When young Black people are considered more culpable for youthful mistakes and are disproportionately punished, they spend increasing amounts of time out of school during which they fall behind and become more likely to engage in behavior that puts them at risk of being pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline can be described as the channeling of students out of schools and

into the criminal justice system. School policies such as zero tolerance have resulted in harsh punishments for minor infractions, particularly for students of color (ABA, 2016). Black students as early as preschool are suspended or expelled three times more than White students. Once suspended or expelled, older students are also three times more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system within the following year (ACLU, 2016; Fabelo et al., 2011;). The increased prevalence of law enforcement on campuses has led to growing numbers of on-campus arrests and students getting involved in the juvenile justice system, rather than facing school or district consequences for minor offenses.

The dire consequences of adultification is evident with Black students making up 31% of school arrests in the United States while only representing 16% of total school enrollment (ACLU, 2016). Young people who get caught in this pipeline "...are less likely to have access to meaningful education to allow them to graduate from high school and prepare for higher education and work opportunities" (ABA, 2016). The implicit bias among decision makers who deem Black students as more aggressive and less innocent (adultification) has been attributed as the primary cause for the overwhelmingly unjust treatment of young Black people in the school system (ABA, 2016). It is apparent that steps must be taken not only to produce change in the educational and criminal justice systems, but also to nurture traits and skills that will help young people avoid these hazards and lead to more advantageous growth.

Supporting healthy development. Institutionalized oppression contributes to Black women and girls being considered less than human for centuries. This history of disparagement and exclusion has led to health disparity, adultification,

and criminalization among other forms of discrimination that prevent Black women from realizing their humanity and full citizenship (Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; Harris-Perry, 2011). However, not all young Black adults experience severe physical or mental health responses from racialized acts of intolerance, nor do all youth have experiences that result in criminalized outcomes. These challenges help many young people understand social inequities and cultivate critical consciousness (Leadbeater & Way, 1996). Providing Black youth with interventions that build coping assets such as cultural identity may insulate young people from the negative effects of racial discrimination. Youth equipped with strong racial identities and positive senses of self tend to be more resilient to their environment (Akom, Cammarota & Ginwright, 2008; Brody et al, 2014; Epstein et al., 2017; Gaylord-Harden, Burrow & Cunningham, 2012). The creation of safe spaces for girls and women of color allows them to sustain cultural bonds, fight racism and sexism, and take collective action to overcome barriers to their growth Leadbeater & Way, 1996). The marginalization of Black women and girls in social, academic, and professional settings creates a need to distinctly shape a space for the development of Black girls where they can foster a positive sense of self and challenge the images that are cast of them by society.

Political activist Melissa Harris-Perry (2011) noted that Black women must learn how to live their lives in a world where they are “bombarded with warped images of their humanity...,” and “it can be hard to stand up straight in a crooked room” (p. 29). Building racial identity and pride among Black youth can help young people be aware of discrimination, but also generate a sense of hope to overcome discriminatory obstacles. Empowering young Black women through intervention

activities that promote positive self-identity and affirm self-worth is how we teach them to stand straight and avoid the internalization of biases they may experience. This type of critical civic engagement and empowerment are recommended tools to assist young people in developing the belief that they are not powerless and can work to dismantle systems of oppression (Akom et al., 2008; Epstein et al., 2017; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2012).

Male-focused interventions. Self-empowerment is developing an awareness of the many aspects of one's own humanity, self-actualizing, and behaving in self-affirming manner (Zimmerman, 1995). Much of the current literature on Black youth empowerment focuses on Black boys and young men (Lindsey, 2013). National programs exist that were created to help young Black men overcome misrepresentation and be successful. However, empowerment is just as integral to the self-schemas of Black girls and adolescents as it is for their male counterparts. The empowerment of Black girls requires a framework that speaks to their unique needs and experiences. There has been little research and feminist scholarship that addresses these needs (Lindsey, 2013).

Empowering the Black girl. For young Black women, empowerment is about attending to their distinct realities of growing into young adulthood while negotiating the obstacles of racial bias and gender stereotypes. Providing Black girls with tools that speak to their lived realities may help them tap into their self-awareness and stand in their own power. Research shows that employing a positive, focused, and critical approach to empowerment best serves the needs of young people of color (Brown, 2016; Saleebey, 1996). Applying a strengths-based approach to develop holistic leadership skills requires looking at young Black

women differently. Rather than focusing on the distorted, crooked images and circumstances, strengths perspective calls for recognizing these young women “in the light of their capacities, talents, competencies, possibilities, visions, values, and hopes, however dashed and distorted these may have become through circumstance, oppression, and trauma” (Saleebey, 1996, p. 297). Essential to empowering young people of color is addressing socially imposed barriers and stressors while encouraging the gifts of black girls and adolescents. Querimit and Conner (2003) noted that encouraging the growth of assets among young women of color includes recognizing that the development of their race, ethnicity, class, and gender identities are part of a continuous process to support healthy development.

Setting the stage for empowerment. The present-day existence of biased and unjust aggressions requires deliberate supportive action to teach strategies of resistance that foster positive development (Case, 2017; Jerrigan, 2009). In an empowering youth developmental setting, a non-hierarchal relationship between young people and supportive adults is key to affirming youth as valuable assets contributing in a meaningful manner to the organization. Magic Black Girls’ empowerment-based interventions focus on recognizing the identities of Black girls as assets upon which to build resilience to buffer the experience of marginalization (Peterson & Reid, 2003). As adolescents grow into an awareness of their own identities, they do so through the relationships they negotiate with their peers. Magic Black Girls’ empowerment interventions are comprised of collective and collaborative activities that augment self-efficacy, positive self-identity, and self-esteem (Greene, 1992).

Purpose of the Inquiry

The purpose of this inquiry was to understand how the self-perceptions of Black girls' identities might be used by youth development organizations to generate holistic youth empowerment strategies. Using the holistic youth empowerment model, youth participatory action research, and photovoice methodology, participants shared their personal perceptions of their experiences as Black girls. With information on how Black girls see themselves in relation to the world, it was expected that insight would be gained to create strategies for the holistic empowerment of Black girls, as well as support the organizational advancement of Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute.

Guiding Questions

The current study used a Black feminist thought epistemological lens and Magic Black Girls' holistic youth empowerment model as the conceptual framework that is shaped by two major theories: positive youth development theory and empowerment theory. Drawing from these theories, the following questions were developed to guide the research process:

1. How do young Black women perceive their personal and social identities?
2. How might the self-perceptions of young Black women be used to form holistic empowerment strategies for youth development organizations such as Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute?

Significance of the Inquiry

This youth participatory action research (YPAR) investigation has the potential to generate powerful outcomes such as the following: the creation of counter-narratives that increase self-efficacy and support leadership development and the empowerment of Black girls as researchers to expand to the body of

knowledge pertaining to their own identities. Capturing the self-perceptions of Black adolescent girls will provide insight into their lived experiences, resiliency, and ability to form protective assets. Analysis of this data will guide the formation of research-based strategies for youth-led empowerment and development programs for young Black women. This study contributes to the overall understanding of positive youth development, empowerment, and leadership development specifically for Black adolescent women. Additionally, participation in the research process itself was intended to be a holistic youth empowerment experience that built the leadership capacity of participants and fosters the definition of upstanding narratives.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study was executed using a Black feminist epistemological lens and used the Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute's (MBG) holistic youth empowerment model (HYE) as a conceptual framework. The MBG holistic youth empowerment model serves as the foundation for the work of the organization, informing the vision and practices that create young Black women leaders. Drawn from both positive youth development and empowerment theories, holistic empowerment was defined in this study as helping young people become leaders by cultivating a holistic self-concept, providing a positive space for building positive developmental relationships, and engaging in empowering experiences. Figure 1 depicts how these three elements merge to form the holistic youth empowerment (HYE) model.

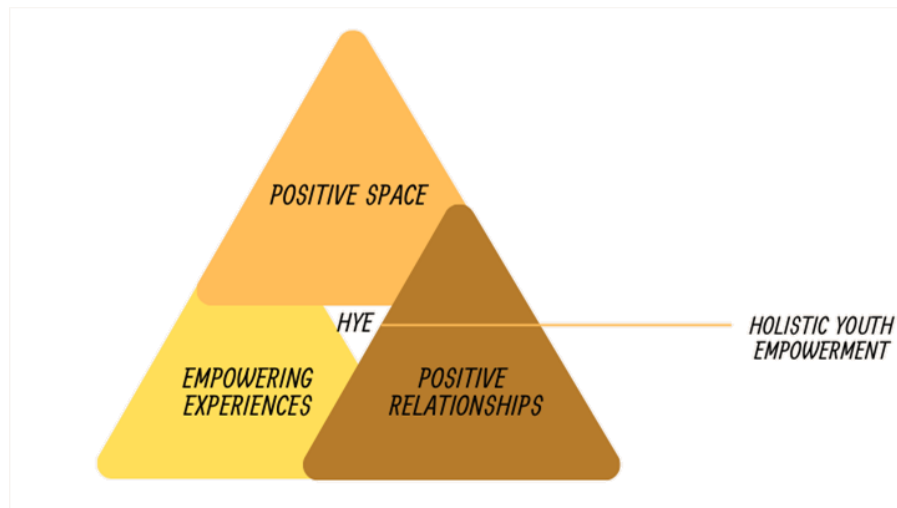


Figure 1. Magic Black Girls' holistic youth empowerment model.

Black Feminist Thought

This investigation into the personal and social perceptions of young Black women was governed by the assumptions of the Black feminist thought (BFT) perspective. Feminism is the movement to end sexist oppression and establish social equality for women. The Black feminist movement developed as a response to the lack of agency and gave a voice to Black women in the second wave of the feminist movement, also known as the women's liberation movement of the 1960's that was primarily led by White women (hooks, 1981). Black feminist thought is grounded in the notion that racism, classism, gender identity, and sexism are all interrelated aspects of Black womanhood (hooks, 1981). Black feminism centers on amplifying and giving validity to the voices and experiences of Black women accounting for all intersections of a Black woman's identity. As such, creating a space that nourishes the growth of Black girls into leaders requires a young woman to bring her whole self into the process. Likewise, as a Black woman who is also a

mother and the founder of MBG, the entirety of my personal experience is a valid source of information that contributes to the interpretation of data.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is HYE model used by Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute. The HYE model's three elements are a synthesis of three foundational theories: Black feminist thought, positive youth development, and critical youth empowerment. When these three elements (positive space, positive relationships, and empowering experiences) are in place, the stage is set for a young person to develop a holistic self-concept and leadership skills—holistic empowerment. Each element of the HYE model merge to create conditions required for young people to forge developmental assets and cultivate relationships through skill-building activities and leadership roles, which prompt them to awaken to their identity and implement real community change.

Key Terms and Use of Language

The language used in this study was intentionally selected to reflect the popular concept of *Black Girl Magic*, which has become a prevalent colloquial term in the Black community in the last five years. Using an everyday term in academic research was a choice made to acknowledge and connect to the everyday experiences and humanity of the participants. Making connections with participants can assist in equalizing the power dynamics and lowering any perceived barriers between the participants and researcher. The word Black is used for African American and the terms Black girl(s) and young Black women are used to describe African American adolescent youth. The term *young people* is used where appropriate, rather than youth or adolescent(s) (which are descriptors of

developmental stages) to focus on the humanity and needs of adolescents as people. Other key terms:

Counterspace: A counterspace is a safe space where young Black people can come together for racial and cultural nourishment. In the safety of a counterspace, members of marginalized groups can feel comfortable with their identities and defy negative social narratives by defining their own (Case, 2017; Clonan-Roy, Jacobs & Nakkula, 2016; Hill Collins, 2000).

Counter-narrative/Upstanding narrative: An upstanding narrative is the researcher's term for a counter-narrative that is an alternative (or counter) identity of positive self-regard that discounts or opposes negative stereotypes and objectification. The establishment of a counternarrative builds competence and sense of worth that helps marginalized groups separate experiences with oppression and stereotypes from their personal identities (Case, 2017; Clonan-Roy et al., 2016; Hill Collins, 2000).

Black Girl Magic: This positive colloquial phrase is used as a term of endearment, symbol of resilience, and mark of excellence attributed to Black or African American women and girls. It is further defined by MBG as a celebration of the divine special quality that has sustained Black women and girls through challenges and enabled them to affect social change (Magic Black Girls, n.d.; Wilson, 2016).

Holistic self-concept: A self-concept is the collection of beliefs one has about oneself that includes ability, racial identity, gender roles, and sexuality (McLeod, 2008). Holistic self-concept is the collection of positive beliefs that

can emerge when one has achieved personal, social, and cultural awareness along with self-efficacy (MBG, 2017).

Self-perception: Self-perception is the view or attitude about the self in relation to the world (McLeod, 2008).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 began with an introduction of the idea of *Black Girl Magic* and transformed a popular slogan into a tool for the empowerment of Black girls. This was followed by a background discussion of the historical and current misrepresentation of Black women in the United States' society and the ways these misrepresentations complicate adolescence for Black girls. The chapter continued by detailing the problem of practice as the need to help Black girls buffer the negative effects of discrimination and institutionalized oppression. After establishing the inquiry's focus, the purpose of study and guiding questions were presented. Finally, this chapter concluded with the significance of the study and emphasized the use of a BFT lens to shape this study, which is rooted in both positive youth and empowerment theory, as well as explanation of key terms. The following chapter will review the literature related to BFT, positive youth development, empowerment theory, youth participatory research, and photovoice.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The need to distinctly shape a space for the development of Black girls stems from the lingering legacy of slavery and institutionalized oppression. Black women and girls have been considered less than human for centuries. Historically, disparagement has ranged from outright sexual assault and harassment to blatant legal discrimination keeping black women from full citizenship (Greene, 1992; Harris-Perry, 2011; Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; Love, 2016; Yang, 2014). Presently, the derision takes place in the public sphere in the form of shaming on social media, workplace and educational discrimination for wearing hair in its natural state, overt sexual objectification in popular media, and educational neglect and abusive treatment by the police (Crenshaw, 1989; Harris-Perry, 2011; Hill Collins, 2000). Changing these lingering portrayals of Black womanhood to present a realistic, encouraging viewpoint that will inspire young Black women requires a space that fosters an upstanding narrative. This counterspace for young Black girls is an environment that helps youth cultivate positive racial identities, social and cultural awareness, and self-regard, in order to resist the negative imagery and perceptions society perpetuates (Case, 2017). Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute, or Magic Black Girls (MBG), serves as a counterspace that insulates young Black women from negative experiences and discrimination by viewing them as valuable and empowering them to engage in the community.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is presented through a Black feminist epistemological lens and is informed by the MBG holistic youth empowerment (HYE) model as a conceptual framework. The MBG HYE model was designed to serve as the foundational

scaffolding for the creation of strategy for youth empowerment organizations seeking to create impactful leaders among young Black women. Derived from Black feminist thought (BFT), positive youth development, and empowerment theories, holistic empowerment was defined in this study as helping young people cultivate a holistic self-concept by providing a space for building positive developmental relationships and engaging in empowering experiences. Figure 1 depicts how these three elements merge to form the holistic youth empowerment (HYE) model. This literature review summarizes the basic tenets of each of the conceptual model's theories and depicts how these ideas work together to form the basis of the HYE model. This review will also highlight how empowering young Black girls can counter the effects of living with racism and institutionalized oppression through the use of youth participatory action research (YPAR) and photovoice as a tool of youth empowerment.

Black Feminist Thought

Black feminism exists to empower Black women to actively thwart the practices and ideas that justify oppression and social injustice (Collins, 2000). Black feminist thought is grounded in the belief that racism, classism, gender bias, and sexism are all interrelated aspects of black womanhood (Hill Collins, 2000; hooks; 1981; Love, 2016). It opposes the exclusion and inequitable merit given to the knowledge, voice, and experience of Black womanhood in academia, public discourse, and socio-political concerns. Black feminist thought seeks equality and equity for Black women and girls through inclusion of their culturally relevant ways of making meaning and lived experiences as valid forms of knowledge. This perspective further purports the making of space for Black women and girls to build

developmental relationships and to define their own concepts of themselves across all intersections of their identities (Harris-Perry, 2011; hooks, 1981; Love, 2016).

History of Black Feminism

Black feminism in the United States developed as a response to the lack of inclusion of Black women in the broader efforts for women's equality. Feminism in general can be described as "viewing the social world in a way that illuminates the forces that create and support inequality, oppression, and injustice, and in doing so, promotes the pursuit of equality and justice" (Crossman, 2020). Both the first and second waves, of feminism in the United States were tied to the struggle for freedom and equality for Black people (Harley & Terborg-Penn, 1978; hooks, 1981; Love, 2016; Taylor, 1998).

During the first wave of feminism, leaders like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth partnered with White women seeking equality by means of suffrage and sought freedom along with the right to vote. Many Black people felt that the suffrage efforts did not fully address their challenges with inequality as the victory was for White women only (Harley & Terborg-Penn, 1978; Love, 2016; Taylor, 1998). In the 1960's, the second wave, also known as Women's Liberation, occurred at the peak of the battle for civil rights for Black Americans. While White women were focused on gender equality in the civic sphere, families, employment, and reproductive health, Black women had no choice but to work outside the home to survive and had been doing so for decades. Black women still faced the lack of ability to freely engage in all the rights of citizenry, including the right to vote because of Jim Crow laws (Crossman, 2020; Harley & Terborg-Penn, 1978; hooks, 1981). Amid the struggle for civil rights, Black women found themselves also

facing gender discrimination, as capable women were often given sexist roles and forced to take a backseat to the leadership of men. The broader, dominant, feminist perspective's failure to account for the realities of all women created the foundation for Black women to further their own vehicle of feminism. Black women turned to the ideology of critical theorists as they waged their own battle for equality (Harley & Terborg-Penn, 1978; Hill Collins, 2000; Taylor, 1998).

Rooted in critical theory. Black feminist thought emerged in the late 1960's and early 1970's as a movement for the liberation of Black women. The ideology of BFT is rooted in concepts shaped from critical theorists such as Carter G. Woodson, and Paulo Freire, all of whom have advocated that power lies in the hands of those who create and control knowledge (Freire, 1971; Gramsci, 1970; Woodson, 1990). Such knowledge forms the basis of policies, beliefs, and practices that become the way of life for those governed by them. The knowledge is often used to marginalize and oppress those not in power, so as to maintain the system of power. These thinkers contend that the struggle between the people and the ruling class has been the source of social change (Freire, 1971; Pellow, 2008). Black feminist thought challenges the assumptions of academia regarding what is considered valid forms of knowledge and thus sets the standard for moral and social norms. Additionally, BFT challenges unjust, exclusionary practices and discrimination in society by questioning and modifying the inaccurate characterizations of Black women. BFT intentionally centers on the inclusion of actual lived experiences and treating meaning made by Black women as valid.

Black Feminist Thought is a Tool of Liberation

Seeking empowerment, BFT aims to give Black women and girls the agency to move themselves from the margins of society into a more justice self-defined space of justice. Black women's experiences and ways of knowing that have been oppressed through the enslavement of Africans in the United States and the systematically enforced Eurocentric perspectives and traditions are validated by BFT (Akom, 2011). Black feminist thought is freedom for Black women from the intersectional oppression based on race, class, gender identity, and sexism that mold the reality of Black womanhood (hooks, 1981). Black feminist thought gives Black women agency to produce a body of knowledge and identity narratives that reflect their own lived experiences.

The idea of Black womanhood is hedged in negative stereotypes of black women that portray painful and harmful narratives of what it means to be a Black woman in the United States. These imaginings have historical roots that harken back to slavery when all Africans were commodified as property to be prodded and examined in the same manner as animals. The bodies of Black women have been on display for public objectification for centuries leading to the formation of negative stereotypes (Crossman, 2020; Harley & Terborg-Penn, 1978; hooks, 1981). From the overly sexed jezebel and non-sexual obese mammy, to the more modern images of the strong matriarch, welfare mother, and wanton video vixen, stereotypes have been attributed to Black women that cast them as "other;" something other than women and human beings.

These stereotypical imaginings of Black woman are rooted in the sense of "otherness" that does not allow Black women to be fully seen as human (Hill

Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011; hooks, 1981). Seeking to counter negative images of Black women, the BFT stance warrants yielding to Black women control of their own images and narratives, imposing a collective Black women's consciousness. Black feminist thought is empowerment at its essence, as it warrants the Black woman's existence as valid and valuable; it allows her reality to be self-defined and expressed, rather than imposed by unjust societal institutions (Hill Collins, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000).

Self-definition. There is a need for Black women to express their own identities to resist the crooked narratives that have been externally defined and used to exert control and maintain a social hierarchy of systematic racial discrimination (Hill Collins, 2000). Although Black women are no longer legally considered property, the hearts and minds of many in this nation have consigned Black women to live in a realm of objectification. Without a sense of humanity, Black women have been relegated into objects that are readily mocked, shamed, and attacked simply because of their genetic make-up. The archetypal myths of the jezebel, the mammy, the welfare queen, and the strong Black woman continue to shape the existence of the Black woman (hooks, 1981). In defining her own images, the Black woman can generate her own sense of value, identity, and validity. In BFT, new narratives and images are not limited to what is accepted as forms of knowledge in traditional Eurocentric academic and social paradigms. Black feminist knowledge is also inclusive of many ways of knowing and expressing voice and experience, such as song, dance, literature, film, and other media (Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). These forms of knowledge are rooted in the entirety of Black women's identities and lived experiences.

Intersectionality. Black feminist thought differs from traditional feminism in that it does not simply advance the cause of women against gender bias, but it also addresses the total Black woman. Black women have experienced discriminatory relegation throughout history. When justice for Black people has been discussed in research and historical accounts, the focus has been upon Black men, and when issues related to equality for women were considered, the focus was on White women—leaving Black women sidelined (hooks, 1981). Black women had to advocate for their own realities and counter the combined effects of discrimination based on race and sex, as well as the discrimination rooted in the unique experience of being Black and a woman. Crenshaw (1989) contended that Black women are oppressed in ways that often do not fit neatly within the categories of racism or sexism. Rather, Black women are subjected to the mixture or intersectionality of both racism and sexism. Black feminism challenges the lack of opportunity at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and political subordination, and it calls for action to resist and eliminate the systematic barriers of racism that have oppressed and marginalized Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Black feminism is committed to the raising consciousness about Black women by acknowledging the knowledge rooted in the lived realities across our intersectional identities.

Counterspace. Black feminism seeks to give agency to Black women to create a safe space together for racial and cultural nourishment, where they can define their own identities and narratives (Hill Collins, 2000). Allowing young people to form positive, supportive relationships with peers or caring adults is a key aspect of their development. Feminism, in general, supports the idea that in

developing positive relationships with girls and women, girls can acquire new skills (Kelly, Bobo, Avery & McLachlan, 2004). Likewise, Black feminism establishes that Black women and girls need their own spaces to form these connections to affirm their identities and value. Safe spaces for Black women and girls are important as they allow for free discourse that counters the hegemonic negative narrative of oppression (Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981).

Community groups and youth organizations are an optimal setting to foster positive, supportive relationships through which young people gain leadership and community engagement skills (Khan & Jakel, 2017). In an exploratory study on leadership development for African American adolescents, researchers found that African American girls report higher levels of perceived leadership when involved in supportive personal relationships (Teasley, Tyson, & House, 2007). Hill Collins (2000) further explained that safe spaces are where relationships and community engagement can be forged to resist the negative narrative created by dominant culture:

Schools, print and broadcast media, government agencies, and other institutions in the information business reproduce the controlling images of Black womanhood. In response, African-American women have traditionally used family networks and Black community institutions as sites for countering these images. (p. 101)

Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development (PYD) is a foundational theory that informs the HYE model. Positive youth development asserts that all young people have the capacity to flourish in settings with caring adult relationships and safe spaces that allow young people to discover their identities, increase personal awareness, and gain voice as they participate in skill-building community activities (Lerner, 2004).

Positive youth development focuses on the strengths and assets of young people rather than the possibility of risk or delinquency. The PYD approach aims to educate and involve young people in productive activities that address their developmental needs. Giving young people a strong foundation upon which to build caring, supportive relationships, personal awareness, skills and positive life perspectives, makes it less likely that they will engage in risky behavior and it also increases resiliency (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Greenberg, Domitrovich & Weissberg & Durlak, 2017). Youth development is the practice of passing knowledge to young people to prepare them to take their place in the adult world. The elements of PYD generate a recipe for helping young people become their best selves and live their best lives, reaching their full potential.

History of Youth Development

We now know that children actively shape and are shaped by their life circumstances and that the people, events, and institutions in a young person's life affect their growth as they progress through formative stages. Adolescence marks the stage where young people work toward mastering an understanding of their identities and the roles that are expected of them by society. Young people learn to express identity through activities and experiences that promote self-realization and self-definition and lend themselves toward purpose (Erickson, 1968). However, the idea of growth and maturing in stages was not always how children were regarded (King et al., 2005).

Deficit-based perspectives. Prior to the 20th century, children were not truly differentiated from adults, and they were treated as smaller versions of adults from ages as young as three years old (King et al., 2005). It was assumed that

children needed to be controlled and have the deficiencies of youth supplemented through intervening practices. This idea that children were inherently broken led to deficit-based theories and strategies of youth development (Lerner & Thompson, 2002). A deficit-based perspective of youth development is needs-driven and focuses on the external problems of individuals. The fields of mental health, social services, juvenile justice, and education have a long history of focusing on children's deficits, problem behaviors, and pathologies (Epstein, 1999). The dawn of the 21st century brought change in the ways that researchers began to see young people; they began to see young people not as little flawed adults, but rather, as young people encountering one of the many stages of lifelong development. Incomplete or failed stage development was considered the root of problematic behavior (Erickson, 1968). Across many generations, young people were often considered the culprits for social issues of the times, such as crime, drugs, and violence (Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006). As such, there came a need for interventions to assist "troubled" young people at risk of incomplete development and problem behavior (Greenberg et al., 2017).

Risk prevention. As the field grew, researchers began to evaluate programs to find factors that could predict the likelihood of engagement in at-risk behavior. The strategies that came from this research attempted to stop or prevent youth from problematic actions (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002). The efforts of proponents of PYD typically focused on prevention of single problems before they surfaced, such as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and juvenile delinquency. Shifting to addressing youth problems before they occurred was progress, but these tactics were still problem or risk focused and geared the

work of youth practitioners toward singular issues. The dominant framework aimed to prevent risk behaviors became the foundation of government and local organization intervention campaigns against alcohol, drugs, tobacco, violence, high school dropout, and pregnancy (Benson et al., 2006). Studies such as Flay, Graumlich, Segawa, Burns, & Holliday (2004) were conducted on African Americans to prevent young Black people from engaging in risk behavior. Students in fifth through eighth grades from randomly selected schools participated in culturally sensitive prevention programs designed to mitigate violence and sexual behavior and reported fewer risk behaviors over the three-year longitudinal study. However, these effects were only significant for males and the program strategies focused on external qualities. The researchers themselves suggest that the lack of significance for girls may be attributed to the lack of inner-focused strategies emphasizing connection and relationships. Researchers began to criticize the single-issue focused approach to youth development because it neither accounted for co-occurring factors and stages of child development nor included the interaction between a child and their environment (Benson et al., 2006).

Promoting optimal development. Researchers, policy makers, and sponsors of youth development programs began to see that successful adulthood depends on more than an absence of problems (Benson et al., 2006; Pittman, 1999). Preventive measures failed to account for the roles that parents, caregivers, schools, and communities have in influencing youth development. A child's environment is the source from which they develop their norms, values, and skills, which determine how well they negotiate their surroundings. As an early backer of PYD, Pittman (1999) observed that a lack of problems did not necessarily mean

that young people would automatically transition into adulthood without difficulty. She advocated for the shift from considering young people as problematic to promoting a positive assessment of youth development. Researchers and practitioners working with young people began to explore the idea of resiliency and the characteristics that help young people overcome challenges to successful development (Benson et al., 2006; Pittman, 1999; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2003).

Researchers determined that there are protective factors in young people's environments that may help insulate them from negative environmental influences, such as poverty, violence, and abuse. The more protective factors a child has, the more likely they are to adapt and thrive in adverse life circumstances (Catalano et al., 2002; Leffert et al., 1998; Lerner & Thompson, 2002). These research findings were the genesis of interventions and programs that aimed to reduce risks and strengthen protective factors, such as family support, caring adults, positive peer groups, strong sense of self regard, future goal orientation, and engagement in school or community activities (Leffert et al., 1998). Practitioners determined that young people themselves are resources and that building positive assets was a critical strategy to generate positive outcomes for the whole child. Advocates of youth development began using approaches that promoted skills and self-mastery (Catalano et al., 2002).

Defining Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development is the study and process of the optimal development of young people. The PYD perspective is used in many arenas of research and practice including sociology, human development, psychology, social work, education, and youth development. Multidisciplinary in nature, PYD lends itself to a host of definitions that are as varied as are the fields that employ its practices. However, all definitions are based on the understanding that PYD is a developmental process and an approach to youth programming focused on fostering the healthy development of young people (Larson, 2000; Lerner, 2004; Lerner & Thompson, 2002; Walker, Marczak, Blyth, & Borden, 2005). Among the many variations of PYD definitions, the central idea is that it takes deliberate action by caring adults and peers to create an environment that encourages the building of positive attributes like character, compassion, confidence, and caring among youth (Benson et al., 2006). Evaluation has shown that programs and interventions are strengthened when young people are actively engaged as equals in program progression and facilitation. Many frameworks have been developed to actively engage young people in amassing protective factors ("Risk and Protective Factors", n.d.).

Forty Developmental Assets Framework

Research conducted by The Search Institute (2018) about the developmental assets of young people served as the foundation for much of the theoretical frameworks used to explain and operationalize youth development today. The Search Institute is a nonprofit organization that seeks to strengthen PYD in schools, youth programs, families, and communities to help young people become their best

selves (Search Institute, 2018). The developmental assets framework, formed from the Institute's research of students in sixth to twelfth grade, identified 20 external and 20 internal assets that youth need to grow and thrive. These assets are organized into categories of support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. The underlying premise of the framework is that when young people have a strong foundation of support, opportunities for skill building, supportive relationships, an ethic of care, and a positive self-regard, they are more likely to be resilient and avoid risk behavior. Young people who possess these assets are also more likely to pursue higher education and have more positive familial and social relationships (Benson et al., 2006; Larson, 2000; Leffert et al., 1998; "Risk and Protective Factors", n.d.). The Search Institute's study found that among the million sixth through twelfth grade students surveyed, sixth graders reported having more of the 40 assets (21.5) on average than twelfth graders (17.2). The results revealed a decline in perceived assets as well as the need for the establishing of environments that will help young people acquire and maintain these elements that are essential for them to thrive (Larson, 2000; Leffert et al., 1998; NCFY, 2007; Search Institute, 2018).

Although these assets are highly personal and connected to complex internal processes, they do not form in isolation, but are forged from relationships that young people have and the contexts in which these relationships occur (Benson et al., 2006; Leffert et al., 1998). Optimal environments for young people to gain skills to thrive in adulthood are those with caring adults and positive structured activities designed to help them grow and help others (Catalano et al., 2002; Larson, 2000; Leffert et al., 1998). No particular asset, or category thereof, is

solely responsible for positive development; instead, the developmental assets act as building blocks for and benchmarks of PYD (Leffert et al., 1998). It is when a young person has amassed enough of these building blocks that they have an increased likelihood of enhancing their opportunity for positive developmental outcomes (Catalano et al. 2002; Larson, 2000; Leffert et al., 1998).

The Five C's

Lerner's *Five C's* (2004) model is influenced by the Search Institute's framework and consists of five scales of optimal development that involves: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. Competence can be described as possessing a positive outlook and belief in one's own social, academic, and vocational skills. Confidence and connection are when a young person has the quality of self-worth and constructive supportive relationships with caring adults and peers. Character and caring are explained as young people with a sense of morality who understand and respect rules, as well as have empathy for others (Lerner et al., 2005). The 5 C's is one of the most highly used ways of operationalizing PYD and, like other PYD models, shifts from perceiving young people by the negative things they do not do (e.g., they are not doing drugs or engaging in deviant behavior), to the positive qualities that promote growth and success (e.g. demonstrates integrity, personal responsibility, and school engagement). Understanding and engaging young people in PYD is important because the overall outcome is lowered risk behavior, increased community and civic engagement, improved academic performance, and aspirations to pursue a college education (Lerner, Lerner, & Lewin-Bizan, 2009).

The 4-H study. The model asserts that when youth are in a prime environment that fosters growth of the Five C's, they can develop these assets which help navigate risk and promote successful growth into healthy adulthood. A landmark longitudinal PYD study of 215 4-H participants and 215 non-4-H participants conducted by Lerner et al. (2005) was the first that used the Five C's framework. The investigation confirmed that young people involved in PYD report higher levels of the Five C's characteristics, and those not involved have a greater risk of behaviors such as depression, crime, and drug abuse (Lerner, 2004). Findings from this study revealed that 4-H youth showed lowered levels of risk behavior and higher levels of community contribution than their non-4-H peers—including non-4-H participants involved in other extracurricular activities (Lerner et al., 2005). Additional studies have been conducted that replicate the 4-H study, such as the study conducted by Robinson, Esters, Dotterer, McKee, and Tucker (2012) which found that Indiana 4-H'ers also reported significantly higher levels of overall PYD and community contribution than their non-4-H counterparts. The Five C's develop when young people form effective relationships with parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, community program or faith leaders through whom they gain guidance and insight as they develop character, morality, and an ethic of care (Bonell et al., 2016).

The sixth c. When young people engage in learning experiences that facilitate cultivation of the Five C's, they gain personal qualities that can act as buffers against and compensate for environmental risks (Bonell et al., 2016; Lerner 2004). The presence of all C's in young people is said to lead to a sixth C—contribution to society, which some researchers are now including in an expanded

Five C model (Bowers et al., 2010). The realization of each scale in the model would indicate that young people have developed a sense of self, care for and connection with others, values, and skills to achieve goals, which makes them more likely to be civic contributors engaged in decision making and participating in their communities (Bowers et al., 2010; Lerner, 2004). An essential aspect of PYD is community engagement among young people and making sure that adults make encourage positive civic activity (Benson et al., 2006; Lerner et al., 2005).

Adolescence is a period marked by fluidity and flexibility and teens possess the ability to change as the ways in which they relate to the systems in their lives (Lerner, 2002). Working together with young people, adults are tasked with helping them make sense of the world around them as they develop a sense of themselves. Moreover, PYD purports that adults give agency to young people supporting them in voicing their values, learning to navigate their own lives, and make constructive contributions to society (NCFY, 2007; Walker et al., 2005; "Risk and Protective Factors," n.d.).

Shortcomings of Positive Youth Development

Some research has challenged models of PYD, including the Five C's ability to work across settings and environments. In an exploratory study of the Five C's in youth sports, Jones, Dunn, Holt, Sullivan, and Bloom (2011) found that the C's did not emerge among 258 youth participating in sports camps programs. The researchers concluded that the Five C's may not be measurable in sporting programs because the emphasis is upon group dynamics, not just the positive growth of the individual. Additionally, they explained that the Five C's are highly

correlated which make them indistinguishable from each other in dynamic environments.

For young people with marginalized identities, the aspects of their identities that are oppressed and discriminated against become obstacles to circumnavigate in order to thrive. Another significant shortcoming in the PYD field is that there has yet to be culturally relevant adaptation that meets the needs of diverse communities. There are several widely used frameworks, but they often fail to account for environmental influences such as economic status and social inequity (Case, 2017; Hope et al., 2015; Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013; Travis & Leech, 2013). Travis and Leech (2013) explained that while, overall, the tenets of PYD are applicable to Black youth. There is little evidence that reveals how models relate to young Black people. They contended that the Five C model may not match the lived realities of young African Americans, such as socioeconomic inequality, limited access to resources, routine experience of discrimination, and social barriers like the school to prison pipeline (students of color being pushed out of education and into incarceration at overwhelming rates). As such, the researchers offered an empowerment-based model of PYD that builds on the Five C model by adding empowerment as a valued asset linked to engaged citizenship (Travis & Leech, 2013). Hope et al. (2015) also contended that young African American people often live in a reality impacted by racial discrimination which is a barrier to well-being. Their research also describes positive youth interventions that promote critical civic engagement and empowerment as a protective asset that can mitigate the unhealthy impact of marginalization.

Empowerment Theory

In the same manner that the principles of youth development have shifted toward promoting the optimal personal growth of young people, empowerment also focuses on promoting agency among individuals for proactive growth and change. Empowerment is both a theory and a method of working with individuals and communities to help them find agency to influence their own life decisions and organizational functions, and to make community change (Zimmerman, 2000). Empowerment, like BFT, has roots in critical theory tied to the Marxist school of thought via the work of Freire, who describes empowerment as a shift from subjectivity or oppression to critically awareness. This awareness is a critical consciousness of institutional mechanics of oppression and the imbalance of power between the oppressed and the systems with established social hierarchy. Critical consciousness awakens marginalized groups to understand how social systems function to maintain oppression and empowers them to act to rectify the inequities (Freire, 1970; Hope et al., 2015; Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011; Zimmerman, 2000).

Defining Empowerment

The concept of empowerment is multi-disciplinary in nature and used in fields such as psychology, sociology, management, education, community development, and health care. In the field of community psychology, empowerment was coined in the early 1980's and is associated with Rapoport (1981), who defined it as the process of individuals and collectives gaining mastery of their own lives. It also is explained as the process of becoming stronger and more confident and using self-possessed assets to control one's life and claim one's rights (Wilkinson, 1998).

Adams (2008) defined empowerment as the capacity of individuals, groups, or communities to control their conditions and utilize their power to achieve their own goals to maximize life quality. Similar to PYD, empowerment-based youth interventions emphasize building assets to buffer the negative experiences of marginalization and collective social action to address issues that are barriers to an equitable quality of life (Rappaport, 1981; Kar, Pascual, & Chickering, 1999; Peterson & Reid, 2003). Empowerment is a personal process that is fluid and manifests in varying ways among people according to their own context (e.g. identity or community political issues). "Empowerment theory, research, and intervention link individual well-being with the larger social and political environment. It compels us to think in terms of wellness versus illness, competence versus deficit, and strengths versus weaknesses" (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 570).

Advocating for the building of strengths in individuals is critical to the practice of empowerment; however, empowerment is also the on-going process of individuals and communities using assets to gain control over their lives. These processes help individuals understand their environments and actively engage in changing them to improve their quality of life (Zimmerman, 1995). Viewed from a sociological perspective, empowerment is a process used to give opportunity to marginalized groups to develop the skills and assets that allow them to use their power to address discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, or gender. Empowerment is both a practical and political process by which power is shared, distributed, and redistributed in order to justly improve the quality of life for all (Rapport, 1984).

Youth Empowerment

Beyond growing the individual capacity of young people, youth empowerment includes making positive change in the communities of young people (Khan & Jakel, 2017). Zimmerman (2000) described empowerment as the connection between an individual's well-being and their sociopolitical environment, and the opportunity to actively improve themselves and their communities. This understanding of empowerment requires that young people are given voice and involved in the governance of systems that affect their well-being. Involving young people in meaningful roles in organizations and communities helps them learn decision-making, management of resources, cooperation, communication, and leadership, and it improves mental health by increasing self-efficacy and critical awareness. It is also beneficial to adults and society, as it creates a more democratic environment and personal satisfaction among those working with young people in youth organizations (Khan & Jakel, 2017; Zeldin & Petrokubi, 2006). Being inclusive of young people serves the best interests of communities because they are members of the community who are affected by its issues, typically without much say or recourse to address concerns (Khan & Jakel, 2017). Empowerment gives young people a space which they not only belong to but also dynamically shape.

Differentiating Youth Development and Empowerment

Giving young people a space to feel safe and develop themselves personally, as well as a platform to become involved in addressing community concerns is what differentiates youth empowerment from youth development. Organizations like Youth Empowered Solutions (YES!) serve a dual role of being an empowering and

empowered resource that helps individuals master and improve their lives and influences structural changes in the community. The role of an empowering organization is to offer young people the chance to acquire character assets and the skill to make sound decisions (Khan & Jakel, 2017). Empowered organizations extend the sphere of influence for young people through shared power at all levels, cooperative planning, implementation, and respectful relationships between youth and adults. Youth empowerment is a layered construct inclusive of shifting power to youth at both the individual and community level. It is the process and outcome of building capacity in young people to influence the community and providing opportunity to impact social change (Khan & Jakel, 2017).

Critical Youth Empowerment

Building from youth development and empowerment is the concept of critical youth empowerment (CYE) from which the HYE model was fashioned. Critical youth empowerment specifically endeavors to advance young people from marginalized groups and encourages them to actively impact change. Similar to PYD, CYE is characterized by youth-led processes and supportive relationships that develop assets and skills to engage in meaningful social action (Eisman et al., 2016). Although this framework shares the strengths-based focus of PYD, it differs by emphasizing an understanding of identity and overcoming the social barriers that result from identity (Case, 2017). Critical youth empowerment associates the well-being of young people not only to their personal development and social belonging but to their environment as well.

Key dimensions of critical youth empowerment. There are six key elements of CYE that include: welcoming and safe environment, meaningful

engagement, equitable power-sharing with youth, critical awareness and reflection on social political processes, and engagement in individual and community social change (Jennings et al., 2006). Providing young people with an environment that cultivates personal growth, supportive relationships, and access to resources encourages a belief that they can change their lives (Case, 2017). The integration of these elements into youth development programs and strategies allows for young people with marginalized identities to use their critical consciousness to take collective action towards social justice. Similarly, Lavie-Ajayi and Krumer-Nevo (2013) described three key dimensions of critical youth practice that included: creating political awareness, creating a counter narrative, and developing social capital. These dimensions help young people by providing them with the critical awareness of their social identities and space to develop the internal qualities necessary to resist oppressive social structures. Operating from a positionality that questions the adult-centeredness of social structures, CYE considers young people to be just as valuable to society as adults (-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Quijada, Cerecer, Cahill, & Bradley, 2013).

Giving agency to young people. Increasing the capacity of youth to impact their own environments and helping young people help themselves is a central focus of CYE. The work of this perspective involves the personal development of young people and the building of a collective critical consciousness to further social justice (Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013; Quijada et al., 2013). Critical youth empowerment uses a cycle of praxis or critical questioning and analysis to advance young people toward becoming agents in naming their own experiences and changing injustices in their surroundings (Freire, 1971; Duncan-

Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Empowering youth from a critical empowerment framework requires providing continued support of their growth into critically conscious young people who are aware of their social identities and are equipped with the skills to resist issues of inequity and champion positive social change (Bautista, 2012; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Resisting deficiency narrative. For much of history, young people have been seen from a deficit perspective, being full of issues to be resolved, and as potential threats to society (Case, 2017; Giroux, 1994; Libby et al., 2006; Lerner, 2000). Young people are often the targets of policies and interventions designed to cure them of social ills believed to be inherent, despite the ironic fact that young people have been at the forefront of major social movements like Civil Rights and Women's Liberation (Libby et al., 2006). Resisting the deficiency narratives of both youth and race is an essential facet of CYE. In work by Solórzano and Bernal (2001), youths' efforts to question and challenge the status quo was identified as levels of resistance. These researchers developed a four-quadrant model of the types of resistance through which youth move in critical empowerment that included: (a) oppositional resistance with no critical awareness; (b) self-defeating resistance where young people awaken to the existence of oppression but take little or inappropriate action; (c) conformist resistance where young people take action within the oppressive system; and (d) transformative resistance where critically conscious young people take action to transform societal barriers to thriving.

Counterspace. Critical youth empowerment, in alignment with the underpinnings of BFT, calls for young people to become aware or critically conscious as a first step toward tackling injustice. To develop a critical consciousness,

marginalized groups require a counterspace. Counterspaces are social settings that feel safe and allow marginalized groups to defy social deficiency narratives. With a critical consciousness of the social issues that impact their lives, young people can be guided in developing the assets that foster belief in their own competence to address said issues (Freire, 1971; Rapport, 1984; Zimmerman, 1988; Zimmerman, 2000). Counterspaces help young people of marginalized groups cultivate identities to counter socially denigrating stereotypes by which they are often classified. Schools, churches, clubs, and community organizations are environments that can help marginalized groups, such as young Black women, to develop and maintain positive self-regard, forge counter-identities that challenge stereotypes, resist oppression, negotiate their own identities, and work toward social justice (Case, 2017; Clonan-Roy et al., 2016).

Counter narrative. Engagement in counterspaces allows young people to forge a sense of self-efficacy that allows them to assert worth, potential, and place in society (Case, 2017). This counter identity or counter narrative can be described as a positive self-regard in the face of negative objectification and experiences. The establishment of a counter narrative builds competence, sense of worth, and belief among young people that they can achieve their goals. Counterspaces aid in the buoying of a counter-identity by serving as a place for young people to feel safe while exploring their marginalized identities through supportive experiences that bring awareness of the oppression and help them to separate the experiences of oppression and stereotypes from their personal identities. It is a place where young people can define their own identities and create narratives that reflect their lived experiences and avoid internalizing the oppressive narratives created about

them (Case, 2017; Clonan-Roy et al., 2016; Hill Collins, 2000). Case and Hunter (2012) explained that when youth are provided with a safe environment, they are able to awaken and question their marginalized statuses, dis-identify with the negative devaluing perceptions, and create their own identities— they create narratives of worth.

Holistic Youth Empowerment Model

Using HYE to promote the healthy development of Black girls through the use of counter storytelling and defining an upstanding narrative is one of the long-term objectives of MBG. Magic Black Girls engendered the HYE model to achieve this objective for its members. The HYE process involves creating a safe, positive space for members to cultivate positive developmental relationships and engage in empowering experiences. When these conditions are in place, the stage is set for a young person to develop a holistic self-concept and leadership skills—holistic empowerment. The HYE model was derived from foundational theories—Black feminist thought, positive youth development, and empowerment theories—but is most closely aligned with critical youth empowerment framework. The CYE framework supports the critical awareness and empowering of young people so that they can contribute to positive social change.

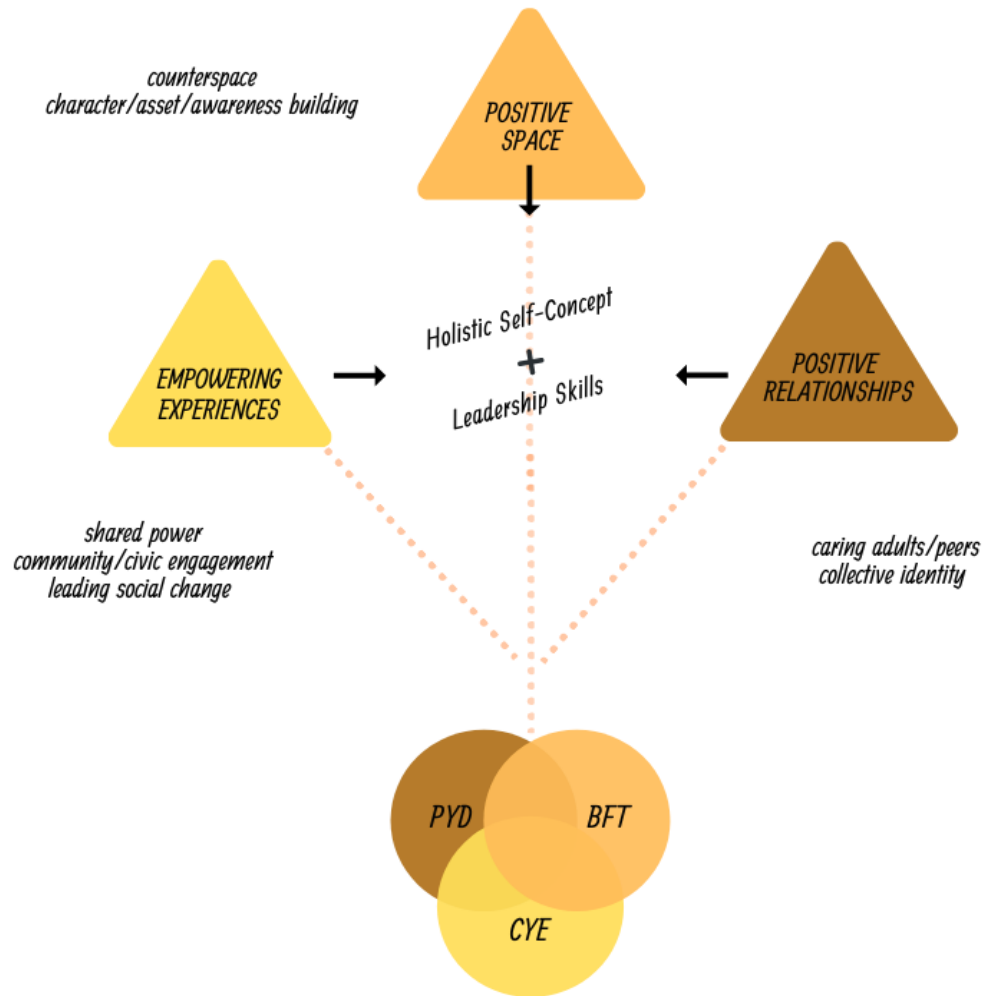


Figure 2. Deconstructed Magic Black Girls' holistic youth empowerment model.

The three foundational theories lend further insight into the HYE model and how it fulfills the key dimensions of critical youth work. Figure 2 illustrates a deconstructed view of the holistic empowerment model to provide an understanding

of how each of these foundational theories contribute to the HYE process. The first element, positive space, is a concept shared by each of the theories, with each concept calling for positive counterspaces that foster personal growth and political awareness or critical consciousness (Akom et al., 2008; Case, 2017; Crenshaw, 1989; Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013; Lerner, 1998; Quijada et al., 2013). This common element conveys that empowering Black girls necessitates a positive space that promotes the building of character, asset growth, and increased personal, social, and cultural awareness.

Positive relationships form the second element of the HYE model; the model contends that such supportive relationships are best developed within positive counterspaces. Further, the three contributing theories pose that positive relationships may serve to affirm identity and self-esteem of young Black women. According to each of the foundational theories, supportive relationships with caring adults and positive peers can support the enhancement of valuable assets of youth development such as character, compassion, communication, self-esteem, critical consciousness, and positive collective identity (Crenshaw, 1989; Lerner, 1998; Quijada et al., 2013).

Moreover, each of the three theories expresses a need for young people to have opportunities to clarify and strengthen their developing identities through community or civic engagement (Case, 2017; hooks, 1981; Lerner, 1998). *Magic Black Girls* deems the opportunity to cultivate and exercise leadership skills as an empowering experience, which constitutes the third element of the HYE model. Empowering experiences are those that hone young people's skills and prepare them for adulthood, including active contribution to efforts that address community

social concerns. Advocating for young women to have a right to engage as equals, share power as decision-makers to address issues and systems that affect their lives, and to ensure that the outcomes meet their needs is an elemental MBG principle. When a young person is holistically empowered, she has developed a positive, holistic self-concept through personal, social, and cultural awareness initiatives and gained leadership skills through engagement in empowering roles.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research (PAR) is a subcategory of action research. Action research entails the systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and taking action to make practical change. Participatory action research is a cyclical process of data collection, reflection, and action that is conducted collectively with research participants (MacDonald, 2012). Participatory action research is a democratic process that recognizes that those who are being studied have the right to participate in all phases of research, from design to analysis, when it concerns their own lived experiences (Vollman, Anderson, & McFarlane, 2004). Originating with the work of Lewin (n.d.), PAR stems back to organizational research that contends that democratic participation in decision-making processes led to greater productivity in factories. Lewin introduced action research as the development of reflection, decision-making, discussion, and action in ordinary people. While Lewin stressed a democratic cycle of observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating, and making modifications, its application was narrow in focus and did not address larger issues of power structures which controlled the systems where he sought change (Adelman, 1993; Lewin, n.d. ; MacDonald, 2012).

According to Vollman et al.(2004), the purpose of PAR is to address systems of power by encouraging research that involves community critical awareness, empowerment, access, social justice, and participation. The creation of narratives of worth and collective action against discrimination is the overarching goal of PAR. Participatory action research is considered an applied empowerment approach to community work and requires adjusting the role of the professional or researcher to become a collaborator or facilitator, rather than the single expert. In this collaborative role, the researcher connects with participants through their worldviews, cultures, and life experiences, and works with them (Zimmerman, 2000). Participatory action research is an example of involving community participants as equals to make an impactful change in their sociopolitical environments. Cooperation among community members as they work together to acquire, grow, and practice policies is fostered by PAR. For some groups, PAR may require individuals to have a consciousness-raising experience that makes them aware of the need to address a challenge (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000).

Lived Experience is Valued Knowledge

Maintaining participants' experiences and valued knowledge, PAR calls on participants to define issues and collect and analyze data to create strategies to improve their lives (Chen, Weiss, & Nicholson, 2010). Participatory action research differs from traditional research where an individual's investigation produces knowledge by using a collective approach to construct knowledge. Validity is gained because the collective information is gathered directly from those living and experiencing the issue. Participants are involved as research partners rather than as subjects who are observed, tested, and investigated. Engaging historically

marginalized groups, such as women, girls, young people, and people of color empowers them to use their voices to express and evaluate their realities and work toward social change. With PAR, research results are not the final goal of an inquiry, but rather, the aim of data collection is to inform collective action. The research process deliberately includes the identifying, understanding, and confronting of social problems (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003).

Using PAR to produce social change requires collaboration with participants throughout the entirety of the project. Community members should participate in the process fully from project design and data gathering to analysis and dissemination of knowledge. This requires academic researchers to impart participating co-researchers with the knowledge required to make informed decisions about the research process, as well as how to identify and discuss intricate social issues. Conducting research with individuals and communities is a viable and rigorous method of producing knowledge that generates data by the community that is authentic to its own experiences and contributes to the larger body of knowledge (Latz, 2017; Liebenberg, 2018; Nykiforuk, Vallianatos, & Nieuwendyk, 2011). It is up to the academic researcher to ensure rigor by conveying methodologies from a strong academic perspective that is also clear and appropriate for the community partners.

Critical Participatory Action Research

Another form of PAR that informs the work of this investigation is critical participatory action research (CPAR). This research builds upon the challenging the traditional structures of research in academia through the use of participants as a

valid source of expertise. Critical participatory research seeks to be of use by weaving research and action to bring about opportunities for social change (Fine & Barreras, 2001). The emphasis of CPAR is upon building investigations rooted in critical theoretical epistemology, such as BFT, critical race, Frierian empowerment, and other Marxist theoretical contexts; which contends the lived experiences and stories of marginalized identities are truths. Understanding that the lives of people exist in unjust environments, the work of a CPAR researcher is to give voice to silence communities in addressing power, oppression, and privilege (Fine & Cross, 2019). The underlying tenet of CPAR is that no research about a marginalized population should be conducted without including members of the population.

Amplifying the voice of participants. Critical participatory research contends that research should empower those who are affected by the issues of injustice being investigated. The work is grounded in the lives of those that have been silenced, marginalized by the lack of power and representation required to exercise systemic justice. Inclusion of the expertise of diverse viewpoints across identities, histories, and social class is how knowledge is formed in CPAR (Maguire, 1987). Community members are brought together to develop and conduct research with an understanding that the mixed stances build knowledge through collective work and exploration of the perspectives of others. The sharing of power as a collective team of experts with the participants, CPAR challenges the traditional concepts of top-down research. Bringing the marginalized narratives to the forefront and examining problems from the bottom up amplifies the voices of communities that have been historically misrepresented in research. Projects emphasize equal distribution of power by employing CPAR insist the principle “no

research on us without us”, and that those who live the issue of concern must lead the investigation, as they are the experts who hold understanding of their own experience. Working with people who have identities which have been disregarded and disempowered, such as young people of color, serves to uncover the ways in which they have been disenfranchised and to motivate action for social change (Fine & Torre, 2019).

Youth-led Participatory Action Research

In a manner similar to CPAR, youth-led participatory action research (YPAR) aims to motivate young people to act against social injustices. Youth participatory action research aims to raise critical awareness of participants and shift the power of knowledge creation to young people as they reveal information from their lived experiences. Like other critical consciousness and empowerment strategies, YPAR centers on equalizing dynamics of power and opportunity—in this case between social systems and youth marginalized by these systems. Youth-led participatory action research holds the same aims as general community-based PAR with the added focus of training young people to conduct research as equals to generate knowledge that can be used to improve their lives and communities (Cammarota, 2017; Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammarota, 2006; Ozer & Douglas, 2015). Youth participatory research, an empowered form of youth development, is a cycle of learning that informs and implements solutions to youth identified problems (London et al., 2003; YPAR Hub, 2018). According to the University of California Berkeley’s YPAR Hub (2018), YPAR can be useful for any young people wanting to make a difference and is an especially powerful approach for young people who are

experiencing marginalization due to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, or other forms of oppression.

In the same manner as PAR, YPAR emphasizes the sharing of power; however, the dynamic is unique because there is an inherent power differential between adults and youth that must be surmounted. The process of YPAR calls for adults to work with young people as researchers with equal voice in the cycle of inquiry and action (Ozer & Douglas, 2015).

Key processes. There are four primary elements of YPAR: (a) iterative research cycle of integrated research and action steps; (b) youth training and practice of research skills; (c) introduction and practice of strategic thinking to influence change; and (d) adults sharing power with the young people involved in the research. Power is the central element of YPAR as it aims to promote the ability of young people to influence systems and communities where they typically do not have opportunities to voice their opinions. Adults involved in YPAR must carefully share the power of decision-making and action implementation with young people (Ozer & Douglas, 2015). The sharing of power can be challenging as it disrupts societal norms where adults hold all power and make decisions for young people on issues that affect them. For YPAR to be true to its theoretical implications, adults must promote ownership of leadership thought processes, respect the ideas generated by young people, and guide them in managing the responsibilities of their equal roles (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2004; Ozer & Douglas, 2015). Implementation of YPAR also calls for a collective process of action, the acquisition and use of communication skills to connect with stakeholders, and the formation of

social networks to spread the influence of the intended action (Ozer & Douglas, 2015).

Benefits of youth participatory action research. The connections and networks that occur through YPAR are some of the derivative benefits of the research technique. Increases in decision-making skills, sense of power, sense of purpose, perception of adult support, and positive mindset regarding education are additional qualities that are gained by adolescents involved in YPAR (Wilson et al., 2007). Young people of color often face social issues such as racism and discrimination, and YPAR offers the opportunity to become aware, analyze, and act on these issues. The empowerment of young people through YPAR allows them to develop a critical consciousness and positive sense of self rather than internalize the negative narratives and stereotypes that society holds of them.

Understanding social issues from a critical perspective helps young people from marginalized groups know that these issues are not attributed to individuals, rather, they are societal-level concerns that require a broad, collective action (Ozer & Douglas, 2015; Watts et al., 2011). The aim of YPAR is to legitimize the realities of young people by cultivating them to become agents of social change and advocacy through research (Burke, Greene & McKenna, 2017). YPAR studies employ a variety of research methodologies and explore countless issues (i.e., critical community dialogue, surveys, focus groups and photography). Practitioners in the field of public health, social work, youth development, and education have guided youth toward collective action using YPAR strategies that have affected real change.

Photovoice

A common PAR strategy, photovoice is an innovative way to involve marginalized populations to actively contribute to research that explores participants' lived realities. Photovoice was first used with women in the Yunnan Province of China by Wang and Burris (1997) to explore issues of reproductive health. Photovoice allows participants to share their perceptions and lived experiences by capturing photographs and narrating the images. Photovoice is a tool for people to identify, represent, and improve their environments. It was designed to be a catalyst for community change and is rooted in feminist and critical consciousness (Harley & Hunn, 2015; Harley, Hunn, Elliot, & Canfield, 2015; Wang & Burris, 1997). Photovoice compliments the ideologies of BFT, CYE, and YPAR because it accentuates empowering marginalized or oppressed groups (Harley et al., 2015). Demonstrating the life and experiences of participants, the photovoice process elicits meaning from the images of their realities. Photovoice gives voice and agency to people of marginalized groups to construct meaning from their own realities and identify community concerns, conduct research, and advocate for social change (Minthorn & Marsh, 2016).

Researchers have used photovoice to explore a variety of issues among oppressed groups such as young Black women exploring HIV risk, Australian young homeless people exploring health issues, and spirituality among low-income African American teenagers (Dixon & Hadjialexiou, 2005; Harley & Hunn, 2015, Turner, Sparks, Woods-Jaeger, Lightfoot, 2018). Other researchers have asserted that photovoice is an advocacy tool for oppressed communities to seek social justice (Minthorn & Marsh, 2016; Molloy, 2007; Peabody, 2013; Wang, 2006). Photovoice

is used by educators in a variety of subjects, such as math, writing, research, as well as social advocacy (Schell, Ferguson, Hamoline, Shea, & Thomas-MacLean, 2009; Zenkov & Harmon, 2009). Black feminist thought and photovoice create a pathway for young Black women to develop their own critical consciousness and create knowledge in the form of images that depict how negative narratives and experiences may influence their lives.

Goals of Photovoice

Photovoice is a process that allows participants to name their experiences and move toward action to address concerns. "Photovoice is a qualitative, community-based participatory action research methodology that is both culturally appropriate and culturally sensitive for research with African Americans" (Harley et al., 2015 p. 35). There are three main goals of photovoice:

1. Represent concerns and realities of communities,
2. Encourage critical discourse about identified individual and community issues, and
3. Reach those who influence systems and policy makers.

(Harley et al., 2015; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006).

Photovoice is a technique that honors the experiences and voices of community participants, giving members the ability to communicate their experiences as knowledge by taking photos in relation to a selected research topic. Using cameras, participants become co-researchers who take photos to identify issues and educate society about their perspectives and experiences as depicted in the images—participants generate knowledge (Mollory, 2007; Harley & Hunn, 2015; Harley et al., 2015; Wang, 1997; Wang, 2006).

Conducting Photovoice

In photovoice, community members are considered experts in their own lived experiences (Peabody, 2013). Projects begin by providing cameras to participants to capture pictures that represent their responses to research questions. Participants meet regularly with the researcher for a facilitated process of photo selection, discussion, and written description. Photovoice group facilitation often uses a Freirean-based method of analysis known as the SHOWeD: See, Happening, Our, Why, Empowerment/ Evaluation, and Do (Wang & Burris, 1997). The SHOWeD process seeks to identify the problem or asset, critically discuss, and develop strategies of improvement. SHOWeD questions help researchers to create a deep understanding of the institutional or social constructs that uphold the status quo, as well as possible actions that can be taken to implement social change.

Some research teams elect not to use SHOWeD questions in their original format and either alter them or use them as an indirect discussion guide. SHOWeD reflects the need for a systematic process of identifying and critical analysis social issues, leading to the creation of resources and strategies to address them with meaningful social action (Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan, Bardoshi, & Pula, 2009). Participants then label and caption their photos and provide written narrative accounts that tell the stories of the photos. Whether through SHOWeD, or an adaption thereof, the analysis process is a critical space for coding, identifying themes, and creating knowledge to be disseminated and acted upon (Wang, 1999). Figure 3 presents a depiction of the guide.

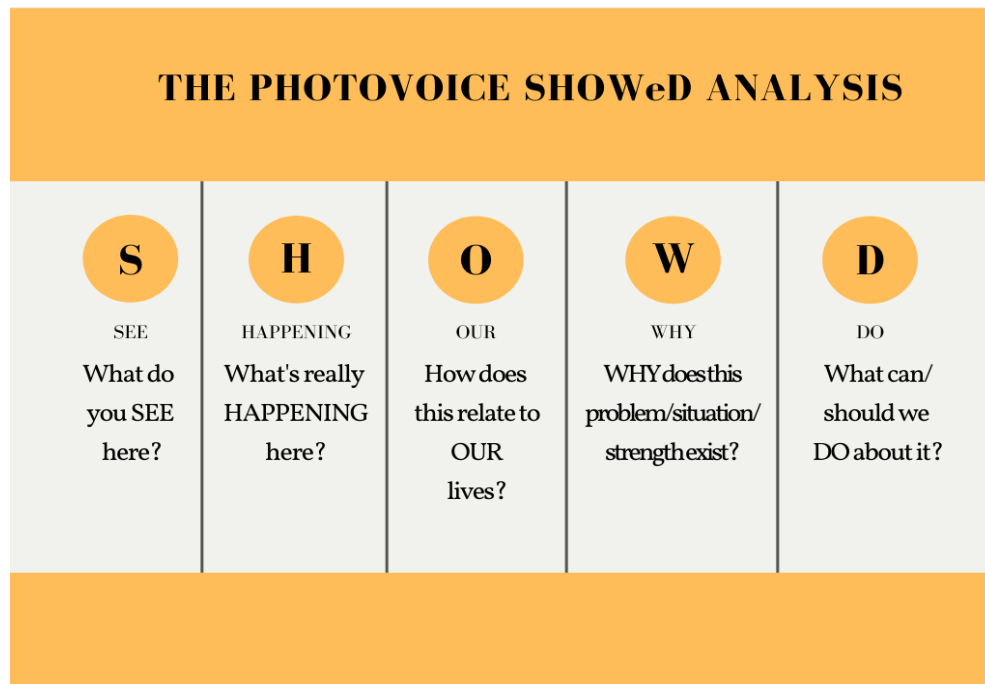


Figure 3. SHOWeD photo analysis guide.

Sharing and acting upon findings. Photovoice research concludes with the development of an action plan to share and address the issues discovered. Wang and Burris (1997) emphasized that it is critical that photovoice findings are shared in a manner that can meaningfully address issues and impact policy for social change. Putting power in the hands of community members to disseminate findings highlights their voice and ability to influence the decision-making and dispersal of resources. Failing to disseminate findings to the appropriate stakeholders and brokers of power in a manner that it is meaningful for participants runs the risk of further silencing marginalized groups (Liebenberg, 2018; Ozer & Douglas, 2015, 2016). Despite this risk, researchers who are willing to engage critically and include participants in the process may find that photovoice is a

powerful, creative approach to research that impacts social change (Liebenberg, 2018).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of substantive literature that supports the conceptual framework that guides the work of the MBG. The discussion began by reviewing the major tenets of BFT, which is used as the epistemological lens for the collection and interpretation of data for this investigation. In reviewing the literature on BFT, PYD, and empowerment, the role of these theoretical concepts were reviewed considered in relation to how they serve as the building blocks for the HYE model. In addition to summarizing and evaluating these theories, the chapter provided an overview of PAR. The chapter wraps up by tying in how the three elements of the HYE model are derived from the theoretical foundation. The next chapter will disclose the purpose, guiding questions, and theoretical lens of this inquiry; in addition, it will describe how photovoice methodology was used as a YPAR inquiry approach. The chapter will also describe the researcher's role in the project development, methods, ethical considerations, and limitations.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

There is limited research that details the perceptions of Black girl's lived experiences and what it is like to be a Black girl. Understanding the perspective of Black girls about the happenings of their everyday lives, including any challenges that they encounter, as they advance through adolescence can provide youth-serving organizations with greater understanding of any needs that may require strategic intervention. This qualitative youth participatory action research (YPAR) investigation was designed to gather data on Black girl identity based on the holistic youth empowerment model. Participants used photos to demonstrate their personal perceptions of their experience of being Black girls. It was anticipated that understanding how Black girls see themselves in relation to the world would offer insight about their racial identity awareness and development. The purpose of this inquiry was to use the understanding gained on what it is like to be a Black girl to generate holistic youth empowerment strategies for youth serving organizations, such as Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute.

Guiding Questions

This YPAR study drew from Black feminist thought, positive youth development theory and empowerment theory. Emerging from these theories the following questions were developed to guide the research process:

1. How do Black, girls currently perceive their personal and social identities?
2. How might the self-perceptions of Black girls be used to create holistic empowerment strategies for youth serving organizations, such as Magic Black Girls Leadership institute?

This chapter begins with an overview of the study, research questions, and the YPAR design that was used. The next section will cover photovoice as an inquiry approach and methodology. The subsequent sections describe the Picture the Magic Photovoice project including the setting, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis process. The final section discusses the steps taken to ensure validity, ethical considerations, limitations of the study, and the chapter's summary.

Inquiry Design

This investigation applied an YPAR design to explore the perceptions of the Black girls' personal and social identity. This approach was chosen to empower the girls to act as researchers as they collected data to express their perspectives, identify concerns, collectively verify their findings, and begin to take action for social change. YPAR falls under the umbrella of participatory action research, and similarly to other critical consciousness and empowerment strategies, centers on equalizing power dynamics and opportunity between systems of power and the disenfranchised- in this case, young people (Ozer & Douglas, 2015). The aim of YPAR is to legitimize the realities of young people and cultivate them to become agents of social change and advocacy through research (Burke et al., 2017). YPAR studies explore countless issues and employ a variety of research methodologies i.e., critical community dialogue, surveys, focus groups and photography). For the purposes of this study, a photovoice methodology was used to investigate the guiding questions.

Photovoice as a Youth Participatory Action Research Tool

Photovoice was chosen as the action research methodology for this project because it is grounded in Black feminist and critical theoretical roots, which call for empowering oppressed groups to generate knowledge and shifting power to marginalized groups (Harley et al., 2015; Stringer & Dwyer, 2005). As a culturally sensitive methodology, photovoice aims to honor the experience and voice of the participants by representing their realities and concerns with their own chosen images (Harley et al., 2015). Action research assumes that those who live their lives have the deepest understanding of it and are valuable keepers of knowledge (Stringer & Dwyer, 2005). As the principal investigator, I deemed photovoice an appropriate qualitative method for this study because it seeks to honor the lived experiences of participants, encourages discourse, and influences social change as it addresses the needs uncovered by participants (Harley et al., 2015 Wang, 2006; Wang & Burris, 1997). Using photovoice as a YPAR method promoted the expansion of participants' critical consciousness and racial identity awareness and simultaneously informed the study about aspects of Black girl identity. Thus, photovoice was a tool for liberation by validating the voices of Black girls as sources. With photovoice, participants were free tell their stories with the goal of becoming makers of knowledge.

Accordingly, the photovoice process allowed for the purposive pinpointing of participants included in the study, rather than forcing random selection approaches, because having Black girls who opt into participation was central to this study's underlying concept of empowerment. Providing Black girls with the opportunity to express how they see themselves and self-define their identity using photos bears

the requisite vital elements of the holistic youth empowerment model--positive space, positive relationships, and empowering experiences. It was expected that this photovoice project would allow girls to establish their own critical consciousness as researchers while simultaneously informing the study about Black girl identity.

Photovoice Overview

This section presents a brief overview of how this study employed the photovoice process. Using their own mobile phone cameras, participants became co-researchers who took pictures to identify issues and educate society about their perspective on their lives as Black girls. Participants generated knowledge of their perceptions of the identity of being a Black girl (Harley & Hunn, 2015; Harley et al., 2015; Mollory, 2007; Stringer & Dwyer, 2005; Wang, 1997; Wang, 2006). The participants (co-researchers) were given a prompt to respond to by taking pictures. The participants conducted fieldwork for one week to gather data (photographs) guided by the initial project prompt and then met for preliminary data analysis. This cycle was repeated for the second project prompt. During the preliminary analysis, the co-researchers and principal research team, which consisted of myself as principal investigator and two trained research assistants, met for a facilitated review process which was comprised of a photo review using structured worksheets, discussion, photo selection, and written description of selected images. The details of this process will be discussed later in this chapter; however, the following section offers a summary of the photovoice data review process.

The SHOWeD method of analysis was an alternative version of the Freirean-based method of analysis termed SHOWeD- See, Happening, Our, Why, Empowerment/ Evaluation, Do- that is typically used in photovoice (Wang & Burris,

1997). The SHOWeD process asks participants to consider the following questions: *What do you See here? What's really Happening here? How does this relate to Our lives? Why does this situation/strength exist? What can/should we Do about it?* The process uses these questions to pinpoint the problems or advantages found in the participants' environment. These findings are then critically examined to form plans to improve or build in research for identified areas of concern. The questions in SHOWeD analysis process guide participants in making meaning of their data within the context of the institutional or social constructs that created the circumstances they have documented in their data. The questions also encourage them to begin considering what sort of action can be taken to spearhead social change addressing their concerns. SHOWeD is a guide for the participant's individual review of their data, as well as the set of questions used by facilitators to draw out critical reflection in group discussion (Wang & Burris, 1997). This method aims to encourage the participants to think critically about what the data showed.

While the SHOWeD analysis is standard, it is common practice to adjust it, use a portion, or develop alternative guides to analysis to fit the needs of the participants and scope of the project. The present study employed an adaptation of the analysis method called PHOTO (Amos, Read, Cobb, & Pabani, 2012). Rather than the standard question, the PHOTO process used the following statements/questions: *Describe your Picture. What's Happening* in your picture? *Why did you take a picture of this? What does this photo Tell* us about your life as a Black girl? *What Opportunities* for improving yourself or the community are revealed by this photo? PHOTO was selected as the guiding analysis foundation because of its ease of understanding and ability to adjust the language to suit the

population and subject matter. The questions in PHOTO were used on the worksheets used individually to examine every picture submitted as data by the participants. Additionally, the set of PHOTO questions were used to assist group discussion of pictures, as well the starting point for the principal research team's analysis and coding of the data which is described in detail later in this chapter.

The Picture the Magic Project

Setting

This project aimed to contribute to the advancement of youth development organizations such as Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute, an emerging non-profit organization that focuses on empowering promising young Black girls to become leaders using the holistic youth empowerment model. The Magic Black Girls membership body is composed of young Black girls from 7th to 12th grade, college mentors, and community volunteers. Research activities took place in the greater Sacramento county region. PHOTO analysis meetings were held in a donated co-working office space located in the study region, and researchers were free to conduct fieldwork by taking photographs in areas of their own choosing.

Participant Selection

Purposive sampling is a selective sampling practice which allows researchers to rely on their own discernment when choosing from a population of potential study participants. This method of selection is effective for investigations that due to the study's nature or design limits participant numbers and characteristics, such as the need for a homogenous group. Use of the sampling method helps the researcher to be intentional in selecting a group of people that best inform the research question under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order to recruit

the targeted sample of Black female adolescent participants who were 14 – 18 years old, a purposeful sampling method was used. Members of the MBG and the community at large were invited to participate in the research study. The project age range was chosen because selected girls had the autonomy and maturity to conduct the field work required for data collection, engage in meaningful dialogue, and ability to fully comply with safety guidelines. Excluded from participation were males and young women who did not identify with African American or Black ethnic experience. These individuals were excluded because they were not within the scope of this research which focused on the identity development and empowerment of Black girls. Prior recruitment and to data collection, human subject research approval was obtained from the University of the Pacific's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Recruitment. The recruitment for the project was conducted via social media posting, word of mouth, information tables at various community events (e.g. church festivals, school carnivals, and family nights out), email messages to local nonprofit organizations and churches, information sessions, and publicly posted flyers in the greater Sacramento county area. There were five public information sessions held at coffee shops and other local small businesses. The information sessions provided potential participants and their parent or guardians with details about the project. At the end of the presentation, there was opportunity for questions and to register for the project. Parental consent packets and participant commitment forms were provided to those who elected to participate. Included in the paperwork packets were waivers, assent forms, emergency forms, and intake questionnaires to complete which are shown in

Appendices B and C. Each of the potential participants who completed the paperwork at the information sessions met the criteria for inclusion and were included in the study.

Family connections. Familial relationships were a unique attribute of the project participants that had to be effectively managed by the principal investigator. There were two sets of sisters who volunteered to contribute to *Picture the Magic*. One set of sisters were three years apart in age and the second set had an age difference of two years. The second set also happened to be my children which was imperative to acknowledge as the principal investigator and author of this study. In order to maintain both comfort and project integrity, the co-researchers were grouped for activities in a manner that kept them separate from relatives, myself included. The involvement of related participants in the project was deemed in accordance with the Black feminist framework that accepts all lived experiences, including family ties, as valid knowledge. The constant evaluation of my own position, as researcher and mother of two participants, in the research process by using researcher journals to monitor the power dynamics and influence, I guided the co-researchers help to maintain focus on the aim of the study. Keeping the goals of YPAR in the forefront, helped me to ensure that an environment was created where co-researchers felt secure enough to express themselves and contribute to the research dialogues.

Incentives. There were no monetary costs associated with participating in this project. Participation in *Picture the Magic* offered several potential benefits and incentives to those who self-selected into the project. Participants may have gained valuable leadership skills, photography training, research experience, made

community connections, and increased their sense of self-efficacy and racial pride from having exposure to positive ideas of Blackness, rather than biased stereotypes (Brown, 2016; Saleebey, 1996). All participants received a complimentary t-shirt and were provided snacks and meals at required sessions. Participants who volunteered and completed the research project received certificates of research completion, documentation of 40 hours of voluntary project participation, and \$100 dollar Visa gift cards.

Training

Prior to data collection, the co-researchers were required to participate in research training. The one-day training session prepared the girls for project participation by imparting information on the general project expectations, photovoice process, research ethics, and photography. Group agreements to guide the expectations for PHOTO sessions were generated by the group. The principal research team presented information about themselves to aid trust-building. The girls also participated in ice breaker activities to facilitate group connection. A professional photographer provided a presentation on the use of light and space. The photographer also taught the girls how to effectively capture digital images. The co-researchers engaged in additional exercises to practice taking pictures prior to beginning the field work of collecting photos in response to the central question “*What’s it like to be a Black girl?*” I developed this simpler form of the research question to facilitate potential participants in understanding what the study was essentially about. This question was further decoded for the selected co-researchers to the project prompts: (a) *How do you see yourself as a Black girl?*;

(b) *How do you think others see you as a Black girl?;* and (c) *How does being a Black girl impact or affect your life?*

Principal Research Team

The photovoice project portion of this investigation was facilitated with the assistance of two research assistants. The two assistants were also Black women who aided in co-researchers in understanding the research tasks and encouraged engagement in project exercises. It was important that I chose Black women to support guiding the project procedure in order to create a counterspace environment. Our perceived status as insiders who were once Black girls was hoped to foster co-researchers to open about their lived experiences as Black girls. Although some barriers may have existed between the principle research team and the co-researchers such as differences in class, sexual orientation, age, and family relationships; it was expected that the commonality of race and gender would ultimately prove to be a factor that gave the team an insider status. Using the same materials provided to the co-researchers, the assistants were provided training on the scope of the project and the photovoice process. Additional preparation was taken to review facilitation strategies used for small and large group dialogues. The training materials and outlines are provided as reference in Appendix F. The principle research team kept journals as a measure to carefully separate our own reflections and experiences and keep the focus on uncovering the true experience and perceptions of the co-researchers. Specifics on how research assistants supported the fieldwork and data analysis are provided in the next section and chapters.

Fieldwork

At the conclusion of the training, the first photo prompt for the first cycle of fieldwork was revealed to the co-researchers. The co-researchers were offered cameras to borrow, but all elected to use their own mobile phones to take photos that represent their responses to each of the photo prompts. The co-researchers were directed to capture a collection of up to 10 of pictures that represented their response to the first prompt. Co-researchers were instructed to email their collection of pictures to the principal researcher a password-protected email address that was provided during training. The co-researchers were given a two-week period to gather data for the first prompt, and a single week to collect data for the remaining prompts. The initial data collection period was longer to ensure that there would be extended time to explain and clarify the process of preliminary data analysis and photo selection during the first PHOTO session. Researchers conducted fieldwork to gather data according to the prompting questions and time frames listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Fieldwork Timeline and Prompts

Fieldwork Timeline & Prompts		
Collection 1	How do you see yourself as a Black young woman?	Two weeks
Collection 2	How do you think that others see you as a Black young woman?	One Week
Collection 3	How does being a Black young woman impact your life?	One Week

Gathering data. Co-researchers had a two-week fieldwork cycle to gather data for Collection 1; which consisted of up to 10 pictures. Co-researchers were

instructed to send photos to the designated password-secured email address as they were taken. The next two prompts for the second cycle of fieldwork (for Collection 2 and Collection 3) were revealed at the end of the first PHOTO session. It was expected that with extended time to meticulously go through the initial PHOTO session, the co-researchers would understand the PHOTO analysis process well enough to proceed more quickly with the remaining fieldwork. Therefore, following the same process used for the initial cycle of fieldwork for Collection 1, the girls gathered data but with a shortened one-week timeline took pictures for the next two collections. An email message was sent to the co-researchers at the mid-point of each collection period to appeal to them to conduct their fieldwork of collecting data, check to see if they had questions or concerns, and remind them of the process of data submission. As photos were submitted, they were organized into folders grouped by prompt and co-research names. Emailed photos were stored on the password protected computer and backed up on a password protected USB file for use at the PHOTO sessions.

PHOTO Sessions

After data was gathered for Collection 1, an analysis session was facilitated using a modified version of the traditional SHOWeD process called PHOTO which was adapted from Amos et al. (2012). Figure 3 depicts PHOTO analysis guide/worksheet used for review and discussion of pictures. This analysis worksheet was also used to guide the group discussion among researchers as they learned to interpret their photos and explore ways to take social action, or opportunities (as indicated on the PHOTO worksheet) to address any notable issues. Co-researchers described their pictures, what was happened in them, and why they captured the

image. Also, each revealed what the images told about themselves and their lives as Black girls. At each PHOTO review session, co-researchers were reminded that the photographs in their collections belonged to them individually and they had the right to choose if which would be released for use in this project.

Co-researcher photo analysis. The initial PHOTO session was planned to be a group discussion of the pictures, the research experience, collective analysis and then individual analysis and selection of photos. However, the midpoint check-in email was responded to by several girls stating that they had not taken any photos because they felt stuck, or were unclear on how to proceed. In response, the prompt was rephrased to ask the co-researchers to simply take pictures that showed who they were as Black girls. In response to the confusion and questions raised about the initial prompt, I along with the other members of the principal research team noted that it was developmentally appropriate that some of the girls struggled with the concept of self-identity. Adolescence is the period of life when young people become aware of aspects of their personal identity, and they work to master the social tasks while maturing into adulthood. In other words, young people are going through the work of learning who they are for themselves and in relation to others in society. For Black young people, this process includes the formation of a racial identity (Brody et al, 2014; Jennings et al., 2006). Moreover, YPAR calls for the training and provision of skills to young people to produce knowledge about the lived issues they are researching (YPAR Hub, 2018). With this understanding in mind, we adjusted the PHOTO session to offer the girls background information on how ethnic and other identity awareness forms in young people.

Photo session one. The first PHOTO session was adapted to supplement the co-researchers understanding of identity formation (see Appendix G), and the hope was that this information would also encourage the girls to explore new facets of their identity as they proceeded with the project. These exercises were led after the fieldwork to help provide context and enrich that they would discuss with the entire group. Selected photos were projected on a screen for all to see as each co-researcher shared thoughts from their PHOTO worksheets with the group. The group shared with each other thoughts and expressed feelings about the images. Researchers then chose three photos in response to the given prompt which were labeled and described on a narrative worksheet. Upon conclusion of the first PHOTO session, the remaining prompts were revealed for Collection 2 and Collection 3 which they had a one-week period to conduct their fieldwork– taking photos. See Figure 4 which provides information about the photo analysis guide that was used.

photo analysis guide	
P H O T O	Describe your PICTURE
	What is HAPPENING in your picture?
	Why did you take a picture OF this?
	What does this picture TELL us about your experience as a Black girl?
	What OPPORTUNITIES for improving your well-being or the community are revealed in this photo?

Figure 4. PHOTO analysis guide (Adapted from Amos et al., 2012).

PHOTO session two. In the same manner as PHOTO session one, adjustments were made to the planned photo session based on the midpoint (sent in the middle of the collection period) email check-in because co-researchers were delayed in conducting fieldwork to collect data. The second PHOTO session was modified to accommodate additional background information on the significance of their research (See Appendix G for exercise outlines). In the supplemental training exercises, the co-researchers participated in exercises that offered information on the history of research in the Black community, a review of the project's research terminology and aims, and an opportunity to communicate their thoughts about the exercises in a group discussion. For the remainder of the second PHOTO session, co-researchers continued the analysis process for the data gathered in response to each of the remaining prompts. As was done in the first PHOTO session, researchers chose up to five pictures for prompts 2 and 3 that best represented their responses. The pictures were discussed, narrowed down to the chosen images, and described on the narrative worksheet.

PHOTO session three. The final PHOTO session focused on completing photo collections, evaluating the project, reviewing the principal research team's primary analysis, member checking the findings, and cultivating plans based on agreed upon themes. Having had time to reflect on all collected data and participate in an additional discussion, co-researchers were given time to re-evaluate their collections. At this point in the process, co-researchers were free to swap pictures and edit the narratives as they worked to finalize all three collections.

Co-researchers were provided with a summary of the steps taken by the principal research team to analyze and code the data (discussed in detail in the

section that follows). The emergent themes were conveyed to the co-researchers as a member check for accuracy. The co-researchers were able to deliberate and give the principal investigator feedback on information that they felt should be altered or incorporated into thematic analysis. Additionally, evaluative exercises (shown in Appendix G) were conducted that encouraged the co-researchers to share in words, images, and symbols how they felt about the research process and to begin to share ideas on how to implement ideas from the themes. The evaluative portion of the session consisted of the girls rotating through workstations in which they wrote, drew, molded clay, or brainstormed ideas in response to instructions left at each station. The ideas posed strategies to implement activities based on the themes were included in the final group planning exercise, while the rest was noted for anecdotal data. The final planning exercise was a critical aspect of the photovoice process where findings and strategies are developed to be shared with relevant stakeholders.

Data Collection Analysis

All PHOTO sessions were attended by co-researchers and facilitated by the principal research team. Table 2 shows the data collection schedule including an estimated time commitment that was expected for each step of the project. The principal research team guided the PHOTO discussions, image selection, and worksheet completion. The principal research team recorded (unguided) field notes on our own personal reactions to the project process in research journals. The purpose of the research journals was to document emerging concepts from the PHOTO sessions and reflective insights. The photos and their accompanying narratives, evaluation notes, and researcher journals were included in the data

review and examination conducted by the principal research team. The data was scrutinized, using a general inductive coding method, to ensure that the rich description and meaning would support the construction of an understanding of Black girl identity.

Table 2
Magic Data Collection Schedule

Week	Task	Approx. Duration
Zero	Info Orientation	1. 5 hours
1	One-day training session -- Participants must complete training on photography, research basics, ethics, and safety guidelines. Participants will be provided photography equipment and materials at the conclusion of the training.	6 hours
1-2	Fieldwork Cycle A -- Co-researchers have 2 weeks to capture images to build photo collections of up 10 photos in response to prompts 1. Midpoint check-in email sent on Wednesday of this week.	2-4 hours
2	PHOTO Analysis 1 -- Co-researchers review photo collections & examine in the PHOTO analysis discussion.	6 hours
3	Fieldwork Cycle B -- Co-researchers have 1 week to capture images to build a photo collection of up 10 photos in response to prompt 2 & 3. Midpoint check-in email sent on Wednesday of this week.	6-8 hours
4	PHOTO Analysis 2 -- Co-researchers review photo collections & examine in the PHOTO analysis discussion.	6 hours
5-7	Primary Data Review -- The principal researcher and assistants conduct a data analysis and compile identified themes and concerns.	N/A
7	PHOTO Analysis 3 -- Entire research team met to conduct group analysis of themes and concerns in order to outline possible research-based strategies to address identified issues. Co-researchers finalize their collection and narration for project reveal.	6 hours
10	Picture the Magic Gallery -- Public presentation of data to invited community members and stakeholders.	4 hours
Total Estimated Time Commitment:		36 - 42 hours

Inductive coding. Inductive coding has goals to reduce, display, and verify the data. Inductive analysis is a detailed review and an interpretation of raw data to produce categories, conceptual themes, or a model. Through an iterative process of data review guided by the research questions and objectives, categories are generated from the data (Thomas, 2006). The raw narrative and photographic data for the study was analyzed using an inductive coding process by the principal research team. An inductive analysis allows the themes to emerge from the data, rather than testing out the fit of data a priori hypotheses. The purpose of conducting an inductive analysis is to condense raw data into a summarized format that demonstrates connections between the findings and research questions or objectives which can be developed into a model or explanation of the experiences evident in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this coding process, an evaluator carries out analysis to create a set of categories, and in a parallel process a second coder creates an additional set of categories from the raw data. The two sets of categories are compared to determine areas of overlap, and if there are areas of disagreement further discussion and analysis may take place. To augment credibility of the findings, member checks are then conducted to allow participants to comment and assess the analysis and interpretation of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Thomas, 2006).

Inductive analysis was the process chosen for this study as it allowed for the reduction of a complex set of data while exploring themes that represented the perceptions held by the participants by checking for consistency between evaluators and co-researchers. At the outset of the analysis, we used the PHOTO worksheet to conduct an evaluation of the photo collections of the co-researchers in their

assigned group. The principal researcher team's PHOTO worksheets, the co-researchers' PHOTO worksheets, and written narratives were then all used for coding. The principal researcher team each conducted independent parallel coding. The use of multiple sources, or triangulation of data combined with independent parallel coding was employed to form a more thorough understanding of the perceived experience of being a Black girl.

In this process, the researchers independently reviewed the data to gain an understanding of the emerging common ideas. Photos, PHOTO worksheets, narratives, and researcher journals were all reviewed, initialed, and categorized. Notes were made on ideas that were relevant to the photo prompts and guiding questions. Continuing with independent parallel analysis, several ideas were noted by each principal researcher through multiple reviews of the photo collections. As patterns were noticed, key words and phrases that were similar were written on sticky note paper and organized in stacks. To check for clarity and consistency of the first individual analysis, each collective set of raw data (photos, narratives, field notes), were passed two times which were reviewed and analyzed by another principal researcher who had not coded the group's data.

Using inductive coding process, the researchers examined the data creating an independent set of categories (Thomas, 2006). Following the parallel process, the researchers discussed the groupings and made adjustments as necessary to the coding categories to ensure that the ideas expressed by the co-researchers were captured. All decisions to add or remove categories were made through a deliberation process of sharing perspectives on the ideas drawn from the data set until we reached agreement. When no further key concepts could be uncovered, it

was agreed upon to move ahead to develop themes. The ideas were posted on a large wall and in an iterative process category were discussed, regrouped, and to achieve agreement on apparent themes.

Researcher journals. Each member of the principal research team captured field notes throughout the research project. These notes were the individual record of each researcher's personal reaction and perceptions as they assisted the co-researchers in expressing their viewpoints. These notes were unstructured in nature but were designed to be used to allow us to keep our own reflections separate and not impose upon the thoughts of the co-researchers. As noted by Cohen and Crabtree (2006), we agreed to note anything that came up that needed to be addressed such as reflections on stories told by co-researchers, observations of the process, and capture patterns noticed in the discussions and data.

Additional analysis. Following the team's collective analysis of the photographic data and narratives, these journals were reviewed for overall patterns of reflection and observation to discover additional categories or themes using inductive coding by the principal investigator. An additional summative review of the data was conducted after taking time away from gathered information. Qualitative research analysis requires multiple iterations with breaks between sessions of the coding process to ensure thorough examination of the data (Elliot, 2018). Taking a break from the cycle of coding and analysis is critical because to the iterative cycle of analysis, allowing for reliability of the analysis across time. Upon return to the data and thematic analysis, the themes were still apparent. However, modifications were made to the theme titles to be more reflective on the

theoretical and conceptual frameworks employed by the study. These resulting revised themes were then presented for a member check among the co-researchers at the final PHOTO session.

Member check. The information and understanding gleaned from the data was brought back to the co-researchers for a member check process at the final PHOTO session. In this member check discussion, the nascent themes were revealed, along with examples of photos and narratives from which they were derived. The co-researchers were encouraged to clarify meaning of their photos, comment on whether the themes reflected their perceived experiences, and their responses were noted and incorporated into the final analysis. The use of follow-up activities such as focus groups, interviews, reviewing transcripts, and group discussion are ways in which member checks are conducted in qualitative analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003). This feedback was collected through small group and whole group discussion activities that are explained in the next section and activity outlines are detailed in the Appendix G. This was the girls' opportunity to express opinions on the themes and request that any alterations were made. This assessment of alignment with the perceptions of the co-researchers was imperative to ensure that the findings and strategic approaches offered were represented the collective voice of the co-researchers.

Evaluation and Planning

In addition to substantiation of the thematic accuracy, the co-researchers wrote and spoke about the activities and ideas they had to support personal growth and leadership development based on the themes. This information was captured notes taken in research journals and evaluative activities of the final PHOTO

session. Together we discussed the opportunities for taking meaningful action for social change and the resources and stakeholders that were needed to be involved in addressing the concern. We discussed how Magic Black Girls can lead the charge of making meaningful social impact. The thoughts expressed were sorted into ideas, concerns, and activities which could possibly serve to develop strategies for future holistic youth development work of organizations, like Magic Black Girls. After this evaluative process, the principal investigator used the feedback, team analysis, narratives, and raw data to solidify the themes and construct a list of holistic youth empowerment approaches.

Sharing the Findings

The themes and strategies were assembled and presented at the Picture the Magic Gallery event for invited community guests and family members of the research team. The findings compiled from the project and empowerment ideas were shared at the gallery event. The three photo collections from each co-researcher were displayed for public viewing at the gallery. Prior to the gallery event, co-researchers were reminded of their ability to remain anonymous and not speak at the event, but each elected to fully participate and share their photo collections at the event. In addition to displaying their data, the girls were given opportunity to address the audience to verbally share, "*What's it like to be a Black girl?*" Background information on the project, themes, and the resulting strategies were shared at the gallery event. The principal research team was there to present and answer general questions, but the overall focus was on the co-researchers sharing how their photos expressed what it was like to be a Black girl.

Researcher's Role

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the process of systematically attending and documenting how identity (e.g. race and gender) feelings, reactions, beliefs, values, assumptions, and motives that influence the research. It is the practice of looking at oneself as a researcher and taking responsibility for the effects that one's own social position, personal experiences, and beliefs may have on the research- setting, participants, research questions, data collection and interpretative findings (Berger, 2015). Making the positionality of the researchers known is a characteristic of strong qualitative research and in this study was done through journaling during the data collection (PHOTO) and analysis process. Consistent with this study's social constructivist, Black feminist lens, I, as a Black woman researcher could not entirely separate myself from the research. Black feminism necessitates that research concerning Black women must not only be inclusive of Black women but carried out by us making it imperative to acknowledge my role in the data analysis and creation of knowledge (Few et al., 2003; Hill Collins, 1997). The journals reflected our critical consciousness of how our own experiences of being Black girls may have influenced our interpretation of the co-researchers' expressed perceptions. Practicing reflexivity is one factor which lends validity and trustworthiness to this inquiry. Further examination of the researcher's positionality and practice of reflexivity is noted in Chapter 5 of this study.

Trustworthiness

YPAR as a methodology calls for iterative cycles of research, action and evaluation (Ozer & Douglas, 2015, 2015). This photovoice project encompassed

consistent, iterative interactions with the participants to give feedback on the data through critical analysis and dialogue. This cyclical process of analysis using the PHOTO worksheets, presenting pictures for group dialogue, and the completion of narrative worksheets ensured that the meaning ascribed to the data and potential responsive action reflected the co-researchers' perspectives. To demonstrate trustworthiness of this study, data from multiple sources (PHOTO narratives and researcher journals) were included in the analysis. The establishment of trustworthiness was facilitated by the inclusion of a member check to substantiate the primary data analysis by collecting co-researcher insight on the findings. Making comparisons among multiple forms of data increases the understanding of how the researchers perceived their realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Limitations

This study provides valuable insight on the self-perceptions of Black girls, however, the meaning made from the analysis may prove to be less generalizable because it conducted with only seven participants who resided the Sacramento Valley region of California. While conventional, positivist research approaches require generalizability, this inquiry accepts that the findings are not necessarily generalizable the lives of other Black girls from different areas. The methods and findings of this study were not meant to be generalizable but rather to provide an understanding of the perceptions and experience of being Black girls in this region as a way to provide better support and asset building based up their expertise. Additionally, the study was limited by the principal research team being members of the community impacted by the project offers the possibility of the principal research team being considered biased. Sensitivity was established to the possible

perception of bias by being too close to the subject matter and influencing the co-researcher analysis; care was taken to minimize bias by practicing reflexivity. We each acknowledged our positionality and noted personal reflection using the researcher journals.

An important aspect of YPAR research is holding equal power dynamics between the researchers (Ozer & Douglas, 2015; YPAR Hub, 2018). This is typically accomplished in photovoice by allowing the researchers to determine the subject matter to be addressed with photographs and engage in analysis, however, the co-researchers did not have the opportunity to determine the nature and method of the study because this investigation is a dissertation being conducted as a part of the requirements for a degree. The ability to allow the young people to determine the nature and scope of the research would require a level of intense scrutiny and support unavailable to me as a novice, student researcher. Commitment to the concept of shared power was maintained by guiding PHOTO analysis through iterative cycles, conducting an inductive coding process, requesting feedback on the preliminary through a co-researcher member check, using researcher journals account for positionality, and collectively developing and presenting findings to key stakeholders.

Ethical Considerations

This project involved the participation of minors, and as such priority was placed upon the safety and informed consent of their parent or guardian, as well as the assent young people who elected to participate. In accordance with the University of the Pacific Institutional Review Board, a parent/guardian of the participants provided written consent to proceed with the Picture the Magic

Photovoice Project. The informed consent and photo release forms that were completed by guardians and participants can be found in the Appendix C. Only the principal research team had access to the private personal identification information collected for the duration of the study. Additionally, the participants were provided written explanation that principal research team would act as mandated reporters that would have contacted local authorities, per University of the Pacific and state of California guidelines, had any suspected child abuse or threats of harm been revealed during the PHOTO analysis or discussion. Upon conclusion of the study, the information was stored in password-protected computer files located on a personal computer of which only the principal investigator can access. In reporting study results participants were identified using pseudonyms as photos and narratives are discussed. After a period of three years, data that includes the private information of participants shall be destroyed by deleting all electronic files.

Further, the privacy of potential photo subjects in the images taken as data was a major point of consideration. All co-researchers were given project and safety guidelines which are outlined in the photography guidelines found in Appendix F. The guidelines included the requirement to participate in training that encompassed how to capture photos safely and how to approach potential subjects to request verbal consent for photographs. Participants were instructed to protect the privacy of potential subjects by taking pictures of subjects in a manner which avoided showing the faces when possible. If a subject's identity was not obscured in the image, then co-researchers were instructed to request verbal permission. Consent was required to be verbally procured from photo subjects because, as minors, the co-researchers were considered ineligible to acquire written consent

from people who elected to be photographed for the project. Upon giving verbal approval, photo subjects were then provided a written explanation about the project that detailed how to contact the principal investigator and the university should concerns arise. All photographs remain as the property of the researchers who chose whether they released them for use in the project.

As noted previously, there were familial ties between participants that included me as principal investigator. It is likely that a study following a traditional positivist approach would have made the participation of related subjects, especially those related to the researcher ineligible to be included in the investigation. However, using the constructivist-based approach framed in Black feminist thought requires acknowledgement of the relationship rather than the exclusion because of it (Few et al., 2003). It was imperative that these relationships be acknowledged and to design the research process to accommodate for it.

Summary

This chapter covered the overall purpose, theoretical lens, and guiding questions for this research inquiry. Next an explanation of participatory action research (PAR) methodology with a focus on the key processes and benefits of youth participatory action research (YPAR) was provided. Background information about photovoice and its use as a tool of empowerment were covered in the following sections. The photovoice procedure that was followed in this study was provided; which was followed with discussion of the researcher reflexivity, trustworthiness, limitations, and ethical considerations of this study. The next chapter will present the Picture the Magic Photovoice Project data and findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The intent of this study was to contribute to the body of knowledge on the lived experiences and needs of Black girls in order to better understand what it is like to be a Black girl and generate holistic youth empowerment strategies for youth serving organizations i.e., Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute). This study explicitly centered the voices of Black girls to gain understanding of their personal perceptions of their Black girl identity. The goal of the project was to gain insight into the experience of being Black girls through the eyes and voice of the participants. This study examined the self-perceptions of Black girls to forge strategies that would support their resilience and development of leadership skills. The insight and meaning made from the data collected during this study will be used to inform the organizational and programmatic growth of Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute (MBG). This YPAR study drew from Black feminist thought, positive youth development theory, and empowerment theory. Emerging from these theories the following questions were developed to guide the research process:

1. How do Black girls currently perceive their personal and social identities?
2. How might the self-perceptions of Black girls be used to create holistic empowerment strategies for youth serving organizations, such as Magic Black Girls Leadership institute?

The co-researchers were asked to take photos to express their perception of "What's it like to be a Black girl?" They were encouraged to consider this question by conducting fieldwork which was based on three prompts designed to address the study's first guiding question, "*How do Black girls perceive their personal and social identity?*" The prompts (See Table 3) were created to aid the co-researchers with

the collecting data to explore multiple perspectives of their own identity, or what it is like to be them. The prompts examined how the girls saw themselves, their perceptions of how they are seen by others, and how being a Black girl impacts their lives. From the pictures taken in response to each prompt, the co-researchers created a collection of images that they felt represented how they perceived themselves as Black girls. The findings of the photovoice project have provided insight into the way that Black girls perceive their life experience which was utilized to devise action steps and implement strategies of youth empowerment.

Table 3
Fieldwork Prompts

Prompt	Question
1	How do you see yourself as a Black girl?
2	How do you think that others see you as a Black girl?
3	How does being a Black girl impact your life?

This chapter discusses the results and findings of this youth participatory action research (YPAR) study, which was deemed the Picture the Magic Photovoice project. The chapter includes an overview of the investigation, purpose, guiding questions, and fieldwork prompts. This overview is followed by a description of the research team and presentation of the findings. The findings represent the rich description and meaning uncovered through analysis of participant photos, PHOTO analysis worksheets, photo narratives, and notes from the principal research team which comprised of the principal investigator and two research assistants. Finally, the analysis of the results is discussed as well as the themes which emanated from

findings, which are presented in relation to the study's conceptual framework. This chapter concludes with a summary of the key points from the chapter.

Participants

To provide greater understanding of the perspectives expressed in the data and analysis, this section will introduce the co-researchers. The seven co-researchers were Black girls between ages 14 to 16 years old who attended high school in the greater Sacramento county region. Pseudonyms are used in this description, the narratives, and photo analysis in order to preserve the privacy of the minor participants. Renee is a freshman in high school who identifies as being mixed, with a White dad and Black mother. She shared in PHOTO worksheets that this was the first time she has been encouraged to talk about what it is like to be both Black and White. Patrice is a senior with a strong awareness of being Black that was revealed in her narratives, in which she shared that she appreciated the opportunity to be with other girls who get what it is like to be one of the few Black kids at school. Olivia, also a senior, shared a similar sentiment noted in a PHOTO worksheet that stated, "It's very powerful for us to meet like this!" Nicole is a sophomore who speaks of the project as a necessary space for expressing the frustration and pains that she sometimes feels as a Black girl. Tayana is a senior who expressed in her narratives a desire to be a leader "to make things better for us as Black girls, and for all of us." Candace is a junior in high school who sees herself as a growing leader and role model. Aisha is a freshman that asserted in her narratives the importance to her of family connections and being true to herself.

There were two sets of girls that were sisters who participated in the project and one pair of sisters are the children of the principal researcher. It was my decision as principal researcher to make the family relationships apparent and allow the girls to work in small group activities separately from anyone to whom they were related. It was expected that such separation would allow the participants to feel comfortable in fully expressing themselves about their understanding of life as Black girls. This separation was designed to minimize any influencing power dynamic that would possibly pressure the girls to alter how they chose to engage in the research. This influence could not be fully eliminated as the sisters and daughters would continue life together outside of the time spent researching. Acknowledging these familial connections while continuing with the research is supported by the Black feminist perspective as it allows for this unique lived experience to be considered an asset to the project, rather than as a limiting factor (Few et al., 2003). Knowledge of Black girl identity is not of less value because it is shared among relatives.

The Picture the Magic Project Findings

Training Outcomes

The training provided the co-researchers with a solid foundation to build upon as they continued to grow and learn about themselves and research. Figure 5 shows the segment of the training in which the co-researchers were intently engaged with the professional photographer. This image represents the interest, active participation, and learning displayed at the training. Learning and engagement was also documented throughout in the field notes that were logged in the principal research team's journals.



Figure 5. Picture the Magic training.

From observations made about the conversations during the training activities, the co-researchers seemed timid and a bit unsure about the task they were undertaking at the start of the day. A member of the principal research team noted: "These girls are nervous and may need a lot of coaxing to engage in this project in any meaningful way."

Another journal entry logged an observation about the potential for growth among the girls:

These girls are amazing! They were slow to warm up, but they seem eager for the project research. They were truly involved in the workshop by our guest photographer and were asking a lot of questions. I cannot wait to see what they learn. And to see what all of us will learn about ourselves.

Additional anecdotal information was collected using the feedback forms at the end of the training. The anonymous feedback forms corresponded with the field notes revealing the co-researchers' feelings of anxiousness and eagerness. These perceptions were revealed in statements such as: "This is a special opportunity, and I can't wait to get started!"; "I think that I will learn about myself and research."

PHOTO Analysis

During PHOTO session one and two, co-researchers were broken into three small groups with one principal researcher in each group. In the small groups, we assisted the girls in completing PHOTO worksheets for the data collected. Using the PHOTO worksheet, the co-researchers were instructed to think figuratively as they made meaning of the photos and articulated how their pictures answered the prompts. In their effort to analyze their data, the co-researchers added useful information to their worksheets. One worksheet stated, "That even though people try to suppress us, they can't." Other worksheets included, "There's always room for improving bonds within the community" and "It's even more important to listen to Black girls' stories and actually believe what they say." These early analysis perceptions were indications of the sentiment that was conveyed through their photo collections.

The girls were then asked to narrow their collection to five pictures that they would discuss with the entire group. Selected photos were shared and discussed with the group. Figures 6 displays co-researchers sharing their top five pictures for group discussion.



Figure 6. Co-researchers sharing at a PHOTO analysis session.

The PHOTO worksheet was used to guide discussion, and the group was encouraged to ask questions, share thoughts, and express feelings about pictures presented. In these discussions, the co-researchers expressed the symbolism and feelings they were aware of as they viewed their peers' pictures. Group discussions provided supportive and discerning commentary for each researcher. Observations shared encompassed remarks such as, "Your picture reminds me of how many beautiful shades of us there are, and we are so beautiful!" In addition, other group co-researchers were noted as saying, "This picture reminds me of how freeing it can be to just be with our people." Another co-researcher responded to her peer's photo choices by saying, "Is this how you really see yourself, or how you think other people do?" The co-researchers were able to use this peer feedback to assist them in selecting photos they believed would best represent their responses to the fieldwork prompts.

Iterative adaption of the PHOTO sessions. The mid-point email check-in revealed to the principal research team that there was a need for supplemental training to augment the co-researchers' learning and to help the project progress. With an understanding of YPAR aims of educating young people and the prior challenge of understanding aspects of the project, the principal research team decided to proceed by offering more information to aid in comprehension of the research process, what was expected of them, and the value they were creating. Prior to each PHOTO session supplemental enrichment instruction was delivered, and the girls learned about the historical stereotypes and imagery of Black women as well the history of research conducted on the Black community. Appendix G contains outlines of the small group discussion and activities that were provided. It was expected that the girls would gain a new understanding of their role in the research project, gain increased knowledge about conducting research, and better distinguish their perception of themselves from the perception of how they are viewed by others. Observations noted in the researcher journals supported the need for enrichment which was noted in the excerpts of journal entries that follow.

One principal researcher observed at the PHOTO session one: "Two of the girls are sharing with each other that they don't really know how to show what it's like to be Black. They seem to be looking for a right answer." Other notes documented the some of the concerns that occurred with the first mid-point check-in email.

I just received two emails from my group asking me what the fieldwork assignment was that was mentioned in the check-in email. Tayana asked, 'What's the fieldwork? I took pictures, but didn't know what to do for fieldwork? Is that like homework?' I think we need to clarify what we mean.

Another entry taken during the one-day training session denoted: "When we mentioned the fear of research in the Black community, I saw many confused faces. The girls don't seem to know the historical context of how Black people were used for research." It was the review of these observations that led us to determine there was a need to provide on-going enrichment to supplement the original training and ensure that the obligation of YPAR to educate young people about research transpired during the course of the project.

Primary Data Analysis

The photo collections of each co-researcher consisted a total of nine images with three pictures selected for each of the project prompts. These collections were divided among the primary research team for examination according to the small groups designated in the PHOTO sessions. Each of us conducted detailed reviews of the data to uncover patterns in the ideas expressed in the photos and narratives. Next, using an inductive analysis process, the principal researcher team coded all data for their group. The data were analyzed using an inductive coding process that included multiple, parallel examinations of the data to identify concepts that reflected the perceptions expressed by the co-researchers. This investigation resulted in the formation of the preliminary categories shown in Figure 6. The preliminary categories formed using inductive coding were further reduced by the principal research team using a collective grouping process. The preliminary categories were posted on a large wall and in an iterative process for each were discussed and regrouped to achieve agreement on apparent themes.

Preliminary Category	Key Words/ Phrases
Sense of Family	Family, family is important to my identity, my parents, my brothers, family bonds are important, we love family, friends are my family, daddy's girl, love my aunties & grandma, family matters, family is important, unity building, connection, role model for cousins, family time, being with people like me, Black girls coming together, father's love, coming together
Happiness	Having fun, joyful, friends make me happy, laughter joy, smiles, light, shining, celebrate us, happy to be Black, happiness matter, celebrate Blackness, fun, giggles, enjoy family time
Personal Qualities	Black girls can be soft, we are chill, I am calm, sense of innocence, hardworking, athletic, prayerful, spiritual, peaceful, praying, faith, perseverance, powerful, strong-willed, power, leader, leadership, role model, change, dreamers, nature lover, animal lover, sports, creative, chef, confidence, self-assured,
Friendship	Friends matter, Black girls coming together, friends, memory making, squad, good girl friends, pets are best friends,
Creativity	Arts, creativity is my outlet, painting, drawing, artwork, creativity, books, reading, writing gives me life, books spark imagination, sewing, fashion is my passion, art calms me, art is beauty, color has meaning, muraled inspiration,
Individualism	See me, people don't get us, Black girls are unique, need to be seen & heard, I work to overcome obstacles, unique experiences, what you get is not exactly what you see, you miss the colors of me, Black girls' perspective is different from the rest of the world, determination
Leadership skills	Challenge assumptions, awareness, be the change, positive change, Dr. King, speak her mind, use my passion for change, change the world, social justice, fight for justice, social activism, stand for others
Rising Awareness	peace, representation matters, activism & social justice, centered on Blackness, hands off my fro, hair awareness, colors, inclusion, social awareness, different but the same, painful past, historic awareness, roots, culture, African roots
Lack of safety	Microaggression, feel less than, lonely, fear, surrounded by whiteness, they judge us, empty, we have barriers, there are obstacles, safe space, need to feel safe, place for us to be ourselves, come together and be comfortable being Black

Figure 7. Preliminary coding categories with sample key words and phrases.

Following the team analysis, an added summative review of the data was conducted which included a pause to establish reliability. Returning to the data, I found the themes remained evident and the information still corroborated with the thoughts communicated by the co-researchers. However, the theme tiles were modified to reflect the theoretical and conceptual frameworks employed by the

study. The themes that emerged from the team's analysis of the preliminary coding categories displayed in Figure 8 were then presented for a member check among the co-researchers at the final PHOTO session. An in-depth explanation for each of the themes, along with supporting data is presented in the next section.

Theme	Description
Positive Counterspace	Space and experiences where one can be authentic selves, with shared understanding of Black identity.
Self-Definition	The right to discover and determine who they are for themselves, rather than being subject to negative social labels and stereotypes.
Cultural Awareness	An existing awareness of past and present social issues and their effect on Black culture. As well as a desire to learn more and share cultural awareness with others.
Unity & Connection	High value placed upon building and maintaining family and friend connections (sisterhood).
Black Joy	The desire for space and time enjoy being themselves and be carefree, without the worry of social identity.
Blossoming Leadership	The self-perception of selves as budding leaders, role models and activists.
Resistance & Activism	A growing awareness of social injustices and desire to work toward equitable change.

Figure 8. Themes of Black girl identity.

Themes of Black Girl Identity

The images selected and presented in this study are emblematic of the themes that were identified through coding and analysis of the PHOTO worksheets, written narratives, and notes from the researchers' journals. The images are those that consistently represent the expressed responses to the overarching question, "What's it like to be a Black girl?" The themes that follow epitomize the meaning made from the co-researchers living life as Black girls.

Theme 1: Positive Counterspace

The data captured by the co-researchers indicated they had a need for a welcoming, positive, and safe space to be with girls like themselves. The images and narratives of the co-researchers conveyed a desire for places and experiences in which it felt safe to be their authentic selves. The girls expressed the desire to reach out to each other for support. Images which depict this theme are displayed in Figures 9, 10, and 11. In the narrative for Figure 9, *Can I Touch Your Hair?*, Renee explains that she is often questioned about her hair texture and gets requests to touch it. She explained that it makes her feel awkward to have her hair be the thing non-Black people notice most about her and wanting to touch it.



Figure 9. Can I touch your hair?

She stated, "People just say weird things. One girl said, 'I want curly hair, but not that curly. ' I want to have a spot where I people don't focus on my hair or want to touch it because I'm different.'" The image of a sign reading "Hope Lives Here" in



Figure 10. Home is not too far away.

Figure 10 was described as the feeling that Aisha has when she is with her peers. In the narrative for the picture, she wrote that she feels at ease and hopeful when she spends time with other Black girls.



Figure 11. Tinted.

Tinted (Figure 11) was described in Olivia's narrative as follows:

I wanted to take this picture to demonstrate and symbolize how the stereotypes in the media and the beauty standards on social media have tinted the way that I view myself in relation to the world. I sometimes need to have an oasis or something that is untinted [sic], that reminds me of who I can really am and can be.

Co-researchers Renee, Candace, and Olivia all shared similar thoughts through their photo narratives about wanting to come together with people like themselves.

Candace stated, "Coming together with people around you will help you find and accept yourself." Renee also shared in her narrative, "When we have a chance to come together, we can be free and happy. Without any judgement on how we look or act."

Theme 2: Self-Definition

This theme was derived from analysis of the images and narratives of all seven co-researchers. The principal research team noted that each girl displayed or stated their desire to discover, determine, share, and state who they are for themselves. The images and narrative descriptions conveyed the co-researcher's feelings of being judged by others for being black and a need to resist that. The images that follow are examples that best express the essence of this theme.



Figure 12. Black queen, that's me.

Patrice's *Black Queen* photo (*Figure 12*) is an expression of the way that she perceives herself. She shares in her narrative that the statue represents the confidence of which she desires to have more. "I need to start seeing myself in a more positive fashion. I can't let other people label me." The right to not to be judged or defined by anyone else, as well as the desire to be authentic, carefree, unique young women was clearly articulated through the narratives of other researchers, as well.

Nicole characterized this theme by captioning one of her images shown in *Figure 13*, "*idk what you want me to say. it's just me.*" The narrative for her picture articulates that she wishes to "break life's chains, all of it." Accordingly, all field notes taken by the principal research team made note of the imagery reflecting power, renewal, breaking through, and freedom shown in Nicole's collage.



Figure 13. Me.

Figure 14 depicts another photo in Nicole's collection that sustains her illustration self-definition with the caption that states "I can't be contained by your limits."



Figure 14. Bird speed.

Likewise, along with Nicole's data there were more narratives and captions that mentioned not being categorized or stereotyped. Tayana's shared her desire to be

herself by writing, "I am unique because I like cooking and have interests that are way different." Candace writes in her narratives that sees herself as "different from most people," and considers herself as "hard working and independent."

In one of Aisha's narratives, she stated that she was far more than the stereotypes seen in the media.

I am my own person. I am not into all of the things they show you online and on TV. I am into different stuff, and I think that's ok. I want to like what I like and not feel like I have to be a certain way. Or that if I don't like the same music or whatever, that I can't be Black.

Theme 3: Cultural Awareness

The co-researchers showed varying stages of cultural awareness through their data, narratives, and group interaction. This theme arose from images that depicted an awareness of their Blackness. The girls showed knowledge of historical Black culture, as well as present issues. The images shown in this section represent the cultural awareness theme. Figure 15 shows how the Olivia is aware of the United States' history of slavery and how the injustices that began then still exist today. The caption for this picture stated, "As long as we're stuck in the past it will forever be *Us vs. Them.*"



Figure 156. Separate isn't equal.

This caption shows her awareness of her Black identity and how she experiences it.

In her narrative, Olivia writes:

The white rocks are perfect, smooth, and represent how white people are seen throughout history as perfect. The brown bark are [sic] rough, small and there are more of them. They represent how Black people are tough...Black people have to remain strong because even though there are more of us our voices are the minority.

In Figure 16, we see a mural that represents African culture, which shows the co-researchers recognition of Aisha's recognition of her tie to African heritage. The picture's accompanying narrative data revealed that Aisha wants "to empower community, like the Ndebele women who paint homes in their African community"



Figure 16. Ndebele woman.

Tayana's photo titled *All Natural*, shown in Figure 17, features a contemporary art piece that shows a Black woman with natural hair juxtaposed to another painting that illustrates various aspects of slavery and reconstruction eras.



Figure 17. All natural.

The powerful image of Figure 17 revealed her perception of a vital issue in Black culture- the lack of agency over our own Black bodies, including our hair.

Tayana expresses her understanding of this in her narrative:

... a Black woman with all-natural hair... a slightly defiant attitude towards people who would think of touching her hair. The words also display how proud she is to be someone who has 100% natural hair. It is very powerful, especially compared to the ideas shown in painting next to it that show things happened as the end of slavery painting next to it. Tayana goes on to share that the painting represents her and makes her proud to also have natural hair.

Besides what was presented in the photos and narratives, review PHOTO worksheets showed that the co-researcher wanted the opportunity to learn more about who they are as Black people. Olivia's worksheet showed that she wished that more spaces like the project could happen to learn and show others about Blackness.

I want us to bridge the separation. We need to come together and be together, but we need other people to see us too. We need this for ourselves and to do more work like this. But they need to see how great it is to be Black girls. We will never progress if we stay divided.

Theme 4: Unity and Connection

The data that produced this theme were the images that showed how the co-researchers valued sisterhood and family-like connections. Candace's *Respect the Struggle* photo (Figure 18) demonstrates the power of sisterhood, as we see a group of celebratory Black women and girls posing with fists held high. In the photo's narrative, Candace declared, "My family is representing Black power... Black women and men have to support one another and not tear each other down."



Figure 18. Respect the struggle.

The theme of connection continues to be represented in Patrice's photo she titled *Growing Up Black* (Figure 19), an image of family photos, shows that the co-researcher cherishes time spent with family. The narrative data reveals that Patrice believes that her blackness "wasn't a struggle for me and my parents grew made sure I grew up thinking that Black skin was beautiful... My mom was also a good role model of successful black women."



Figure 19. Growing up black.

The incipient theme persisted in Renee's image of clasped hands of contrasting skin shades displayed in *Together* (Figure 20) conveys the image of unity across difference. This is further established in the complementary narrative data, "Seeing from different points of view can give you insight you may have never thought about before when you come together."



Figure 20. Together.

Likewise, a narrative written by Renee stated her belief that in connection across differences.

Often being Black you are a minority wherever you go. And feel like an odd one out. You know you are the same in many ways, but the color of your skin makes you very different... We are the same, but very different.

One of Aisha's narratives explained that an aspect of being a Black girl is enjoying time spent with family as she explains how she looks up to the matriarchs in her family.

My mom, auntie, grandma all standing after church in matching outfits... with goofy poses, which is where I get some of my playfulness. I love to be with my family. The picture shows how much I look up to these female figures in my life and how important they are to me.

Theme 5: Black Joy

This theme reflects the underlying message found in the data of a desired sense of happiness and freedom. The images depicted that these young people desired time and space to enjoy all aspects of themselves. Field notes consistently aligned with the theme of Black joy with observations and reflections recording that we each observed the girls wanted to: (a) cook; (b) read; (c) play sports; (d) enjoy nature; (e) laugh; (f) be artistic; (g) hangout with friends; (h) connect with family; (i) pray; and (j) play without the heaviness of racial identity stereotypes or discrimination. One research journal entry indicated, "The girls seem to really enjoy their conversations between the conversations. The breaks and downtime are moments of bonding that they value." Another entry reflected, "These young ladies have strong friendships and want to be joyous."

They just want to be a regular kid, having fun as they grow into the wonderful leaders they are destined to be.” A third entry conveyed a similar observation, “The girls smile and appear happiest when they share photos about things they enjoy, or that represent pleasurable connections with things and people they care about.”



Figure 21. Magic Black girls.

The images in this section are a representation of the thematic concept of Black girls needing time and space to enjoy themselves as exactly who they are. The joy found in a connection between friends can be seen in Olivia’s image entitled *Magic Black Girls* (Figure 21). Olivia’s narrative imparted that there are good things that come from being a Black girl.

I wanted to show that there is good that comes from being a Black girl. Not only can we get together and instantly relate to each other, we are also stronger together. This embodies what it is like when Black girls connect and make meaningful relationships, we make magic.

Candace’s photo, *My Hair? Yes! Don’t Touch!* (Figure 22), was described in her narrative as, “...people see me as being creative. Being that I taught myself to braid... I believe if you look good, you feel good.” In field notes from a PHOTO

session, Candace was recorded as sharing with the group that braiding was a hobby that she loved. Another entry observed that the photo represents the sense of artistry, satisfaction, and pleasure a co-researcher feels when she braids hair.



Figure 22. My hair? Yes! Don't touch!

Upholding the ideas of the thematic analysis, Tayana's *Bookworm* image (Figure 23) accounts for the concept of Black joy with a picture of a bookshelf in a local bookstore represents her passion for reading. She shares in her narrative that reading takes, "me away and allows me to be free. The books represent the hobby that I love and the enjoyment that reading brings me."



Figure 23. Bookworm.

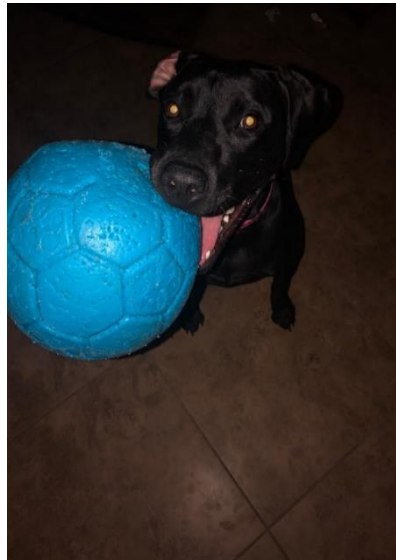


Figure 24. Carefree world.

The photo of her dog in *Carefree World* (Figure 24) is a symbol of the playfulness that Patrice feels she needs to remember to allow herself to feel. Her caption parallels the theme as it states, "I love how carefree my dog is and realize I need to be carefree sometimes, too." In the narrative she elaborates on the feeling by saying, "I chose to take this picture because she was very excited and happy. The ball also can represent the world and how she's happy to hold it... I see that at

times I need to be more carefree and relaxed.” These activities represent the individual interests and their desire to not be seen in stereotypical manner but to be carefree. The narrative data further supported the theme as was established in Nicole’s written account for one of her images describes the joy and hope that she finds in playing soccer.

A pair of soccer cleats with flowers in them, in between them a medal saying, ‘Champions Cup. ’ To the side in the background are two trophies shining brightly. The trophies in the back... lighting up the way to my future where I win the State Cup Championships... Fun and Success. Growth and achievements.

Each of the seven co-researchers collected images to show that to them being a Black girl included being able to do things that allow them to express their own form of joy.

Theme 6: Blossoming Leadership

Data collected by the co-researchers further revealed that another aspect of Black girl identity included individual growth and increasing leadership skills. The entire team expressed an image and/or narrative that they saw themselves as the process of becoming leaders, role models, or activists. Patrice’s narrative showed that being a Black girl means that, despite the challenges of identifying as Black, there are opportunities to grow.

My parents were always open about what people may see when they see Black people. They also always made it sure that I knew that doors may appear to close, but I could still find my way... I could actually lead my own way.

Leadership can be seen in Olivia’s PHOTO worksheets and narratives as she communicates her passion for fashion and creating what she does not find in the world. She stated, “Fashion and creating my own clothes plays a huge role in my

life. This photo represents the opportunity to create more black owned businesses that are aligned with our own values and willing to support the community.” The opportunity to work on the growth of leadership skills, be role models, and make a difference were expressed in unique ways in the photo collections of the co-researchers.

In Renee’s *The Future is Bright* (Figure 25) image expresses her hopefulness for the future and the potential for growth. The image of a tunnel with light at one end represents opportunities for new things. Her narrative pointedly asserted, “You can do anything you can think of now that you are the strongest version of yourself. You have opened doors for learning and new experiences.”



Figure 25. The future is bright.

The representation of the Blossoming Leadership is further demonstrated in an image (Figure 26) captured by Tayana of a partially painted sketch, titled *I’m Still Unfinished*. The picture reflects the co-researcher’s awareness of being a work in progress and her potential for growth. “I’m still figuring things out and I’m not

done growing and I need the space to be able to blossom..." is how Tayana described the image in her narrative.



Figure 26. I'm still unfinished.

The association with leadership is further facilitated within Candace's, *%s of My Heart* (Figure 27), an image of three young children. The children in pictured represent her sense of obligation to her younger siblings, as she captioned the picture as, "I'm My Brother's Keepers."



Figure 27. %s of my heart.

A sense of obligation to others is, again, illustrated in Aisha's picture (Figure 27) of quote and mural of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. which she captioned her picture *The Change I Wish to See*. The narratives of the co-researchers were encapsulated in Aisha's statement, "This represents the change I wish to see and make in the community."



Figure 28. The change I wish to see.

Theme 7: Resistance and Activism

Along with aspirations of leadership, all the co-researchers expressed that resistance and activism was a part of their identity. The girls used a variety of images that developed this theme of a growing awareness of social injustice and desire to work toward making a positive change. Their images show that the co-researchers have an awareness of their racial identity and the maligned, biased perceptions that others may hold of them. Patrice's photo (Figure 29) of a white brick mantle surrounding a black, unlit fireplace represents the co-researcher's feelings of isolation that she feels as being one of few Black students at school.



Figure 29. Sea of Whiteness.

Despite this experience, she spoke against the inequities that come with being one of few Black students.

...how I feel surrounded by predominantly white spaces. The places that I mostly go to are white spaces. It's very uncomfortable because there's never another person who understands. We have to fight for a way to have more spaces for us to feel comfortable being ourselves. A place for Black girls to not feel like we stand out.

Nicole's picture (Figure 29) of a finger partially covering a sign which shows portion that reads 'City Property' is an expression her resistance to being categorized and treated like property with her caption, "We don't belong to you. I don't belong to you. I decide how I should be treated." Her narrative contended, "People seem to still assume that they are able to treat us however they want, as if we are their property."



Figure 30. It's Turkey Time

More evidence to support the theme of resistance to discrimination and bias abounds in the data, such as in Figure 30, titled *Free*, of a monarch butterfly flying above a green net. The picture displays Aisha's belief in standing for freedom and change further demonstrated in her photo narrative.

The Monarch butterfly is a sign of rebirth and change. In this photo it was close to being caught but at that moment it flew up. Even though people will try to oppress us, we still stand up for change.



Figure 31. Free.

Renee expanded the theme with her photo (Figure 32), called *Power*, of a Black fist with a caption that reads "You have the power within." Renee's narrative explained the thematic current of resistance and activism. "After learning about yourself and embracing all your attributes you feel empowered. You fight for what you want and no matter what others say you know all you are capable of." The desire for making a difference, inclusion, diversity, change, and being heard are all major facets of the idea of resistance and activism.



Figure 32. Power.

The seven themes of Black girl identity revealed through this project reflect the conclusions of the Picture the Magic Photovoice Project YPAR and are in alignment with the Black feminist theoretical framework of the study, by making meaning from the data about the lived experiences of co-researchers. The themes which emerged from the analysis were presented to the co-researchers to check for

accuracy. The following section details the process of member checking process and co-researcher response to the identified themes.

Member checking. The final PHOTO session was used to compile the co-researchers' photo collections and conduct a member check of the primary analysis in order to cultivate ideas or plans based on the agreed upon themes. The co-researchers were tasked with determining the accuracy of the themes while reflecting their lives as Black girls. Member checking is the process of bringing findings to participants to confirm the meaning drawn from the data accurately reflects their perspective or understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). For this investigation's member check, the co-researchers were asked to comment on whether the themes accurately reflected their perceived experiences, and their responses were noted and incorporated into the results. We facilitated discussions about each of the themes in small groups to encourage in-depth sharing and then followed by a whole group discussion. Each girl expressed opinions on the themes and were able to request alterations and additions were made to the explanation of the themes. The comments on change were minimal. There were no further themes called for, but a single alteration was asked for by all the co-researchers. Each girl agreed that it was important that the concept of sisterhood was emphasized because they expressed a desire to feel more connection and less isolation from each other as Black girls. A research journal entry captured this moment of consensus as follows:

The researchers are listening to us share the themes with nods of approval and smiles. Several girls snapped their fingers after each theme discussion, to show their pleasure. One girl raised her hand and stood to say very strongly 'THIS is exactly what it's like!' It seems like there is a growing sense of connection forming here. As I write this, another researcher shares that type of connection she wants the most is more than friendships. She is

being interrupted by two other girls who are both almost simultaneously say 'Yes, kind of like having sisters, sisterhood...' and 'Sisters!'

With the emphatic group conformity on sisterhood being a significant concept that described the unity and connection theme the requested alteration made which facilitated the themes were representational of the collective voice of the co-researchers.

Strategizing. Having reached a point of collective understanding and approval of the themes, the co-researchers were tasked with generating ways to take action to implement related strategies to grow MBG. To encourage the co-researchers to discuss the relevance of the themes and to produce specific ways to apply the themes of Black girl identity, we facilitated group exercises. As the co-researchers reported back to the group, a research assistant wrote down the ideas, highlighting ideas that were the same or similar in nature. Figure 32 depicts a summary of ideas shared.

With further conversation and facilitated exercises, these ideas were refined to reflect the main areas expressed by the co-researchers as points of strategic focus for MBG. From this process, there were three core types of ideas and activities that were articulated: (a) a space like the one created for Picture the Magic in their own schools; (b) hosting a conference type event to learn about Black identity and meet mentors; and (c) more Black joy activities. These ideas were drawn from the brainstorming conversations in which they expressed their need for connection in their school and to meet with girls from different schools. They revealed many ideas related to feeling comfortable and free to enjoy themselves (Black joy) with other Black girls at bowling, movie, skating, and dance

events. The “*conference*” focus was uncovered as the girls revealed ideas related to needing mentors, coming together to learn as they prepare for the future, discuss a variety of topics, and celebrate Black heritage. These topics are also indicated in Figure 32. After refining and documenting the three core ideas, they were then revealed at the final gallery exhibit event.

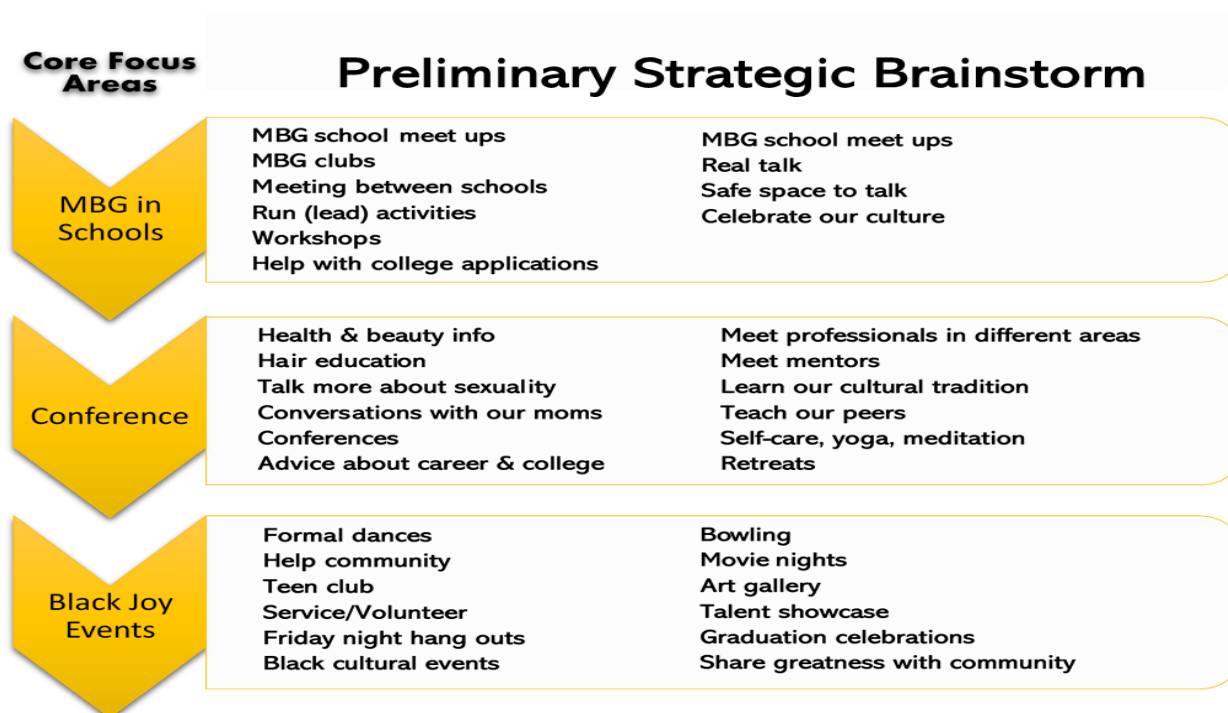


Figure 33. Preliminary strategic brainstorm three core focus areas.

Picture the Magic Gallery

The onus of YPAR is to motivate social action to address concerns raised by data collection and analysis. In the final stage of photovoice research, an event typically occurs to display the photo collections of the researchers for viewing by relevant stakeholders (Wang & Burris, 1997). The images are discussed as they relate to the issues they depict in the lives of participants. For Picture the Magic, the co-researchers organized their ideas into three core areas on which they

believed organizations for Black girls i.e., Magic Black Girls) should focus: MBG activity and clubs in schools, conference type events, and Black joy events. Background information on the project, the finalized photo collections, ensuing themes, and areas of core strategic focus were presented at the project's final event, the Picture the Magic Gallery. Along with displaying their data, the girls were given opportunity to address the audience to verbally share, "*What's it like to be a Black girl?*" Although collecting and analyzing the photo data and documentation of the group analysis process was the primary aim of this project, the statements made at the gallery event proved to be extremely complimentary to the study's thematic analysis.

Table 4 displays how the verbal responses to the overarching question given at the Picture the Magic Gallery are in full alignment with the study's identified themes. Aisha, Renee, and Olivia each touched upon *cultural awareness* by expressing that their identity is about learning about one's culture, understanding what it is like to be Black, and finding out who you are. Candace and Tayana underscored the *blossoming leadership* theme by sharing that being a Black girl means to them that they must lead and be role models. Nicole, Renee, and Tayana highlighted the *self-definition* theme by indicating in their verbal responses that being a Black girl includes being able to be yourself and know your own value. The theme of *unity and connection* was exhibited by Aisha and Renee, as they described connecting with others and knowing that you are not alone as facets of Black girl identity. Olivia, Patricia, and Tayana each reflected *Black joy* when they conveyed that celebrating and enjoying Black cultural identity was a vital part of their identity. *Positive counterspace* was communicated in Patricia's response that

stressed the pains of not being around other Black young people. In their responses which included overcoming barriers along with navigating the barriers of Black womanhood, Nicole and Olivia touched upon the concepts of the *resistance and activism* theme which explored Black girl identity and the verbal responses of the co-researchers.

Table 4
Picture the Magic Gallery Statements

Co-researcher	Verbal Response	Theme
Aisha	Learning about your culture and your heritage. Knowing that you're never alone and there's someone who looks like you.	Cultural Awareness Unity & Connection
Candace	Having a desire to succeed and prove to yourself and others that you have the passion to lead.	Blossoming Leadership
Nicole	Knowing your own value and applying the knowledge you gain to overcome barriers in life.	Self-definition Resistance & Activism
Olivia	It's bittersweet. You try to enjoy the juicy parts of life in growing up being a teenager, while trying to navigate being Black and a woman at the same time.	Black Joy Cultural Awareness Resistance & Activism
Patricia	It's extremely fun and amazing, but also tiring and stressful being the only Black girl in many spaces. But I love being a Black girl and wouldn't change it for anything in the world.	Positive Counterspace Black Joy
Renee	It's being yourself, finding out who you are, and connecting with others.	Self-definition Cultural Awareness Unity & Connection
Tayana	It's celebrating life as who I am. Taking care of my younger siblings because I have to be a role model.	Self-Definition Black Joy Blossoming Leadership

The insightful perceptions of each co-researcher not only served as further confirmation of the data analysis, but also supported the use of photovoice as an empowerment tool to give voice to lived experiences of groups that are often marginalized. The visual expressions of these co-researchers generated a body of knowledge about their collectively expressed experiences of “*What’s it like to be a*

Black girl?” which was validated when given an unrehearsed opportunity to speak to the same question.

This study’s Black feminist theoretical framework contends that an individual’s experience is an authoritative source of knowledge (Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 1984; Wang 1997). As such, the data shed light on the life perceptions of each researcher served that provides context and validity in the understanding the lived realities, identities, and concerns of Black girls. This action research operated to validate that Black girls are valid sources of pragmatic knowledge regarding their own experiences which can inform the strategic planning for youth-serving organizations. With an understanding of Black girl identity, youth-serving organizations i.e., MBG) can begin to develop ways that will support the positive youth development of Black girls despite being confronted with the challenges of systemic racial discrimination. The following section addresses how the themes and strategies discovered through this research can be used to further efforts of holistic youth empowerment.

Building Holistic Youth Empowerment

This study was initiated with the understanding that many barriers to healthy development of Black young people stem from the long-standing existence of discrimination and racial bias exists (hooks, 1981; Hope et al., Hoggard & Thomas, 2015; Jerrigan, 2009). To effectively set the stage for empowerment of Black girls to counter the negative societal attitudes and beliefs requires deliberate supportive action to teach strategies of resistance that foster positive development (Case, 2017; Jerrigan, 2009). This inquiry’s conceptual framework, the Magic Black Girls holistic youth empowerment model, guided the understanding of findings from the

images, worksheets, narratives, and field notes. The analysis revealed three facets of the model that encompassed positive space, positive relationships, and empowering experiences. The member check of the thematic analysis substantiated that Black girls value and seek more of each element. Data indicated the girls appreciate and require safe places to be with others who can relate to their common experiences, build bonds with them, help them to develop personal and cultural awareness, and encourage and nurture leadership skills.

The perceptions of the lived experiences of co-researchers as expressed in the data reflect a need for tools and an environment in which they can learn to counter the bias and adverse behavior from others. Affording Black young people with interventions that guide them in holistic empowerment can serve to enhance resilience and advance a strong, positive personal and cultural awareness (Akom et al., 2008; Brody et al, 2014; Epstein et al., 2017; Gaylord-Harden et al, 2012). Excerpts from the narratives written by Olivia, Patrice, and Tayana that are shown in Figure 34 help to substantiate the use of the HYE model to support the creation of a space for activities which deliberately empower Black girls to forge positive relationships among themselves as they learn to construct their own self-defined images of what it is like to be a Black girl.

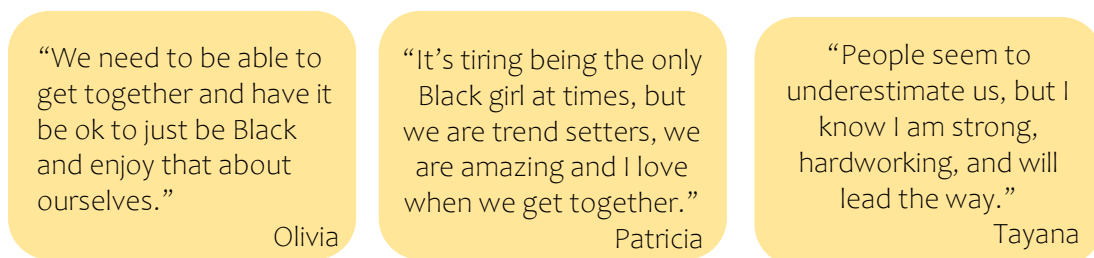


Figure 34. Co-research narrative excerpts supporting HYE.

The analysis of the data supports the use of a holistic youth empowerment approach to build safe spaces for Black girls and women that centers on Blackness allowing them to bond, fight racism and sexism, and take collective action to overcome barriers to their personal evolvment.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter the findings of the Picture the Magic Photovoice Project were discussed. The study's guiding questions and co-researchers were described. The process used to train co-researchers to conduct fieldwork and support their PHOTO analysis was expounded upon in detail. The data analysis and findings of the study were discussed as well as resultant themes. The chapter closed with an explanation of how the data fits in the Magic Black Girls' Holistic Youth Empowerment Model framework. The following chapter will discuss the implications and conclusions of this study, and will address detail suggested approaches in response to the study's second guiding question: *How might the self-perceptions of Black young women be used to create holistic empowerment strategies for youth serving organizations such as Magic Black Girls Leadership institute?*

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."

—Socrates

In this chapter the implications for the findings of this study will be discussed. The themes inferred from the analysis of photographic data and narratives will be used to address with further detail the second guiding question of this study: *How might the self-perceptions of Black young women be used to create holistic empowerment strategies for youth serving organizations such as Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute?* Discussion of the significance of the findings will be presented first in this chapter. Following this section, the core strategies developed in the group brainstorming session are presented. The next section includes the conclusions drawn from the examination of the thematic findings in relation to the study's three strands of theory that involves Black feminist thought, positive youth development, and critical youth empowerment are presented. Next, suggestions for employing the three core focus areas as strategies for the holistic empowerment of Black girls, which were elucidated from this investigation are presented. The chapter proceeds by covering considerations for future research related to exploring Black girl identity and youth empowerment. Closing out the chapter is a reflection upon the impressions that facilitation of the Picture the Magic Photovoice Project has had upon the principal investigator.

Discussion

The primary focus of this study rooted in understanding the central question used to frame the Picture the Magic Photovoice project: *"What's it like to be a Black girl?"* This question emerged as a response to a personal sense of obligation, in

which I felt compelled to develop ways to provide support to Black girls who face the challenge of growing into women in the midst of a society which marginalizes their identity. In this study, I presumed that by understanding what it is like to be a Black girl, interventions could be constructed which may prepare them to circumvent societal bias and discrimination they may encounter. This project ensued from a personal sense of both hope and hopelessness. I was motivated to create Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute to empower all Black girls, like my own daughters, to defy the negativity that circles around the Black girl's identity. I wanted them to find pride in their identity and to teach them that they are capable of being leaders who can define themselves by creating their own narratives – a new paradigm on what it's like to be a Black girl.

Having a handful of girls take pictures of the world around them in and of itself seemed to be an innocuous task, but it was a revolutionary act. Picture the Magic was a rebellious project as it challenged the bounds of conventional academic investigations. The act of asking Black girls about their experiences positioned this work as a form of activism. The inclusion of Black girls as valid sources of knowledge may be seen by some as politically provocative. Research is typically conducted on or about people of color from a deficit perspective rather than from a vantage point where their function is to be sources of expertise (Crenshaw, 1989; Fine & Torre, 2019). The literature revealed scant photovoice studies of this nature and little inquiry focused on the positive youth development and empowerment of Black girls. The literature tends to be exclusive of expressed perceptions of the lived realities and inclusive of deficit-based strategies to fix what is perceived as “broken” among Black young people (Travis & Leech, 2013). While this

investigation was performed in a manner that generated data specific to a localized sample of the population, it is not without merit or validity. Relying on virtually non-existent, generalizable dearth-focused data on Black girls' perceptions and needs, may have only served to further exacerbate the bias and issues of social inequity we seek to resolve. In short, conducting a study in the manner of *Picture the Magic* executed *with* Black girls was vital to enrich our understanding of their world and support them in enhancing their experiences.

The process of this investigation continued to elicit difficulties due to its divergence from traditional research approaches. Although very much aligned with the premise of critical and youth participatory action research, there was contention with practice of equitable sharing of power with the girls in this study. The Institutional Review Board's (IRB) response revealed an aversion to the choice of empowering participants by addressing them as co-researchers, as a way to emphasize the investigation was being conducted *with* and not on them. The IRB's criticism surrounding the study was associated with the girls being referred to as researchers, rather than participants. However, the intent of such language was to further demonstrate that this research was designed alongside the girls, with them positioned as experts on their own cognizance of the reality in which they live. In addition, there was a great deal of trepidation expressed regarding having minors out taking photographs and requesting permission from others. With small alterations to the methodology, the project was able to proceed. These obstacles represented one of the moments in which I came to realize the significance of the unknown territory with this study's use of photovoice to capture the lived experiences and perceptions of Black girls.

Knowing how innovative and vital the research we implemented could be for empowering Black girls, careful steps were taken to conduct a trustworthy analysis. The preliminary analysis occurred with each fieldwork cycle as the co-researchers examined their data to make meaning. The process advanced to primary analysis with the principal researcher team comprised of myself as principal investigator and the research assistants. Our analysis was member checked and further refined which yielded results that were presented as seven themes of Black girl identity. The conclusions drawn from findings and the analysis of what it is like to be a Black girl were used to address this inquiry's guiding questions.

Guiding question 1: How do Black girls perceive their personal and social identities?

The perceptions of the girls who participated in this study as co-researchers were captured through photographs, written narratives, and research observations. When responding to the given project prompts, the co-researchers collected data that represented their perceptions of various aspects of their identity as Black girls. Their photos and narrative data represented how the co-researchers perceived themselves and are embodied by the themes which are presented here.

Theme 1: Positive Counterspace

This theme emerged from data that alluded to gathering, coming together, and connecting with peers. There were photos and written reports of a common desire to be with girls like themselves. Use of the term positive counterspace for this theme was governed by the literature, which purports in BFT, PYD, and CYE that a positive atmosphere is the foundation that encourages optimal development (Brown, 2016; Lerner, 2002; Jerrigan, 2009). When young people have a

supportive environment that supports and nurtures them, it aids in the building of assets to help them cope with and face challenges of racial discrimination and are more likely to overcome society's racial barriers. Not only were the co-researchers able to demonstrate a need for the creation of counterspaces in which they could engage, it was conveyed that the Picture the Magic project served as such for them. Coming together for the project allowed MBG to become a place where the girls were able to foster their own learning in nurturing environment where their reality was validated and considered an important resource.

Theme 2: Self-Definition

The co-researchers shared images that revealed many unique qualities about themselves. They each wanted to be able to learn about themselves and uniquely convey their identities. Included in the desires which were disclosed was a general yearning to not be bound by stereotypes. Images, quotes from narratives, and feedback forms supported the notion of self-expression, as shown through the girls' images depicting talent, creativity, passion, and insurgence conveyed a necessity to be free, authentic, and self-determined. The ways in which co-researchers chose to show who they are and how they wished to be seen are illustrative of the many ways that knowledge can be perceived according to Black feminist theory. By sharing their self-perceptions, the girls also shared valuable knowledge on the experiences of Black girls. The act of defining themselves through their photos was itself a contribution to the store of information on the identity of Black girls.

Theme 3: Cultural Awareness

Each co-researcher disclosed an awareness of their Black identity through the act of electing to participate in this study on understanding the lives of Black girls. Along with the initial awareness, each story told with the data reflects an awareness of a sense of being different from others that are not Black. Renee's descriptions of her images emphasized her perception of being "different, standing out" but feeling the same when "I get to be with other Black girls." Candace's data resounded with a level of awareness and identification with her blackness when she spoke of her family symbolizing Black power. Participation in an activity with a pointedly Black focus may have contributed in some part to their displayed identity consciousness but was also a reflection of where they were on their own timelines of racial identity development.

The co-researchers' appeared to be in early stages of identity formation as was evident with their initial struggle with the first prompt. Thinking of themselves as Black girls and articulating what that meant to them was something that they did not have an opportunity to do before this study. The budding understanding of who and how they perceived themselves to be as well as voiced curiosity about Black history and culture are the contributing elements to this theme. Cultural awareness and identity consciousness are the goals of positive counterspaces. The formation of a healthy sense of self and positive perception of one's own racial identity, or counter narrative, serves as a protective asset among young people with marginalized identities allowing them to disengage from identifying themselves with racially biased stereotypes. With growing cultural awareness and an

expanding counter narrative, Black girls can be equipped to create their own self-determined identity.

Theme 4: Unity and Connection

Sisterhood and family were the central ideas that comprised the foundation of this theme. The data revealed that being connected with loved ones and friends was a part of how the girls viewed themselves. Aisha specifically accentuated this in a narrative describing a photo of herself with friends beneath a statue of Dr. Martin Luther King that stated, “Together my friend and I stand under him to represent unity.” Statements like Aisha’s and images of family and friends that were captured in the data of each researcher further supported the formation of this theme of solidarity. Building on the need for a comfortable atmosphere in which to gather with people that have shared cultural experiences is the necessity for unity within that place. BFT, PYD, and CYE all possess a requisite form of connection among girls and women with peer groups, caring adults, or mentors to form personal relationships. Building positive, supportive relationships helps to cultivate qualities that can serve as social capital that can buffer negative social barriers. The connection and bonds were important for the girls to experience as they allowed for positive affirmation of their identity. Olivia succinctly encapsulated this by declaring it as “magic” when Black girls get together. In the member check of the primary analysis, each co-researcher decidedly called for the concept of sisterhood being stressed to share what it was like for them to be Black girls, as was shown in an anonymous feedback form—“Sisterhood is it period. We need it to get by.”

Theme 5: Black Joy

Adding another layer to the exploration of Black girl identity, Black joy burgeons from the theme of unity and connection. This theme constitutes a feeling that the co-researchers communicated feeling in moments of unity and connection. The counterspace created by the Picture the Magic project itself was a source of happiness and time for them to be themselves, as was documented in the research journal and feedback forms. The distinguishing factor in this theme is the sense of being unfettered that was coveted by the co-researchers. The girls wanted to just be themselves and have fun without fear of whether they ascribed or not to Black girl stereotypes. The evidence for these perceptions was gathered from data filled with images and stories of their talents, hobbies, and passions.

Additionally, stories explaining the satisfaction they perceived when they had the opportunity to come together also sustained the need for carefree moments. Patricia's photo of her dog being carefree (Figure 23) was used to share that she did not see herself as being blithe and desired to be more easy-going. Although none of the theories that inform the HYE conceptual framework explicitly call for joy or happiness as an empowering element, it has the potential to be a critical resulting consequence of the encouragement and bonds that flourish in positive counterspaces. The ability to join with others to defy the negative narratives, simply by being in said space, can elicit feelings of security and comfort that may be interpreted as joy for those who are engaged.

Theme 6: Blossoming Leadership

There was a sense of responsibility or obligation shared by the co-researchers to become women who make a difference in the world in some way.

There were three co-researchers who shared that they viewed themselves as role models for family members and/or the community. Other co-researchers conveyed to fight for freedom and show others the ways that Black girls are “special and make the trends...” as was highlighted in an anonymous feedback form. This theme is an overarching reflection of the concept of holistic youth empowerment. The HYE model contends that providing young people with the appropriate encouraging space and relationships, along with experiences that give them agency serves to nourish their budding critical leadership skills, which was mirrored in the data that showed the co-researchers had a sense of hope and belief in their own ability to positively contribute to society in ways that will counter the racial bias in society. Tayana’s image of the unfinished portrait (Figure 25), corroborated the creation of Blossoming Leadership as a theme of Black girl identity. Critical youth empowerment espouses working with young people to foster a critical consciousness and leadership qualities that serve as both developmental assets and tools to resist social inequity.

Theme 7: Resistance and Activism

Flowering from the idea of Blossoming Leadership, the resistance and activism theme was not only prevalent in this analysis but is at the core of the HYE model. Enabling young people to make positive social change and overcome any obstacles in their developmental path is the fundamental purpose of the HYE model. The data from Picture the Magic reflects the co-researchers increasing awareness of not only their self-identities, but how their identities are received and perceived in the world. This awakening and subsequent desire to challenge the negative perceptions was expressed by all co-researcher data. Nicole’s desire to be free and

not viewed as property; Candace's sense of obligation to be a role model; Aisha's expressed need to be "my own person;" Tayana's pride in her natural hair; Renee's increasing awareness of having the "power within"; Patrice's view of herself as a "Black Queen;" and Olivia's desire to show that "good comes from being a Black girl" are ways in which the co-researchers' images exuded theme of budding consciousness and the wish to make a change.

The process of photovoice research calls for findings to be presented to relevant stakeholders in order to actively support addressing the needs uncovered through the research. The aforementioned themes revealed by this investigation discussed and were used to propose ideas on how to address the needs of Black girls. These collectively generated themes and organizational strategies were presented to stakeholders as the expressed perceptions of the co-researchers' Black girl identity. The thoughts offered in the next section of the chapter reflect the core strategic ideas deemed by the entire research team to be critical in supporting Black girls and were shared with stakeholders (identified to as parents, leaders of youth organizations, and educators).

Guiding Question 2: How might the identity perceptions of Black girls be used to create empowerment strategies for youth serving organizations, such as Magic Black Girls?

Along with sharing the seven themes of Black girl identity, there were three core, holistic youth empowerment strategic categories presented to stakeholders at the gallery event. These ideas were offered as guides from which youth serving organizations can work to design an approach appropriate for the Black girls and other marginalized populations that they serve. These core areas of focus were

shaped in response to and as a result of the research conducted by Black girls on the overarching topic of “What it’s like to be a Black girl?” The results of this study led to three major areas from which HYE efforts could develop that included: (a) school-based empowerment; (b) inspiring personal growth; and (c) commemorating Black joy. These areas were outlined by the co-researchers as the vital areas from which plans could be devised to address the conditions conveyed in the seven themes.

Every theme received an emphatic endorsement from the co-researchers during the member check which was logged in a partial quote from field notes of the evaluative session as feeling “spot-on description of what it’s like to be me.” This sense of consensus, while welcomed, made the task of generating approaches and action steps for the set of themes with much similarity and overlap in concepts challenging. The group discussion held at the final PHOTO session helped the entire research team decide to narrow ideas down to three categories to act as strategic building blocks. There were many unique ideas considered by the researchers, but with continued deliberation patterns began to emerge. The co-researchers, with facilitation assistance from the principal researcher team, focused down their discussion to actions for educators which included activities for personal growth that could be as broad or narrow as deemed necessary and events that would celebrate cultural identity and allow them to happily be their authentic selves.

School-based empowerment seemed to be a natural next step for engaging in the themes of Black girl identity progression because it is where young people spend most of their time. Making sure that this environment served as more of an asset than obstacle to their growth was the aim of this strategic focus. Meeting up,

clubs, workshops, and social gatherings were repeatedly offered as things the girls needed in their school environment. Essentially, they called for counterspaces in which they could bond and feel free to there be authentic selves, which is a need underscored in critical and empowerment theory. The girls, however, did not want to leave the manner in which the “meet-ups” were formed to be left up to educators themselves. The captured notes expressed, “we would need to have a packet, or plans that were already made.” The girls emphasized, again, a desire to determine for themselves how they express their identity. They wanted to ensure that any sort of MBG activity would be designed the way they desired and supported their needs with any activities or events. A call for a self-determined youth development space, in the midst of an institution that often perpetuates implicit bias, to host activities for girls that centers on blackness is a powerful form of activism and resistance. The recognition of school-based empowerment as a core area of focus comprehensively represented the totality of the seven themes, as it reflects each need succinctly.

Knowing the constraints of a school environment, the co-researchers shared that there needed to be more than just school-based programming. They wanted to see MBG continue to have community activities in which they could experience personal growth. This discussion generated a variety of ideas for enrichment on topics such as Black history, research, self-care, sexuality, and spirituality, in order to achieve a sense of increased self and cultural awareness. Included in the notions shared was the call for mentorship. The girls were excited about the possibility to participate in the brainstorming session and shared thoughts such as, “meet college students who have already been through the things we are going through now.”

There were four girls who commented that they would like to interact with professional in fields that were interested, “to help them with their future goals.” Within the group strategy session, there was an immense demand conveyed by co-researchers to have non-traditional, enrichment learning activities to support their cultural, personal, social, and professional growth.

The honoring of Black joy through a variety of events or experiences was the heart of the discussion that lead to this area of focus. The co-researchers shared that at times they just wanted to soak in pleasant feelings about their heritage. They acknowledged that this could and would likely happen in events targeted toward education or personal growth but voiced their longing for fun that centered on Black identity but was not directly educational in nature. In essence, Black girls just want to have fun. They talked about how relationships form and get strengthened by having the chance to be with girls like themselves, as well as celebrating Blackness with others who are not Black. A feedback form accented these sentiments by asserting, “...we need time to just be us and enjoy ourselves, giving zero cares.” Aspiration for time to enjoy themselves without ignoring or worrying about how their Black identity is perceived by others was based on this strategic focal point. Like the other two strategic foci, with an emphasis on coming together, strengthening relationships, and feeling free, commemorating Black joy encompassed the totality of the seven themes of Black girl identity. These themes and the subsequent three strategic focus points are all exhibitions of how HYE model operates to promote optimal development and empowerment of Black girls and other groups of marginalized young people. This chapter continues with a

discussion of the ties between the themes and the theoretical foundation HYE conceptual model are discussed in further detail.

Conclusion

Associating Black Girl Identity and Holistic Youth Empowerment

There were seven themes of Black girl identity which were generated from the data analysis from which strategies for youth development were rendered which intersected with the MBG Holistic Empowerment Model. The deconstructed holistic youth empowerment model (shown in Figure 2) established how the theoretical elements of Black feminist thought, positive youth development, and critical youth empowerment serve as the underpinnings of Magic Black Girl's Holistic Youth Empowerment Model. The connection between the seven emerging themes of Black girl identity to the theoretical roots of the holistic youth empowerment model are explained in the section that follows.

Relationship to Black Feminist Thought

In addition to constructing the complex portrait of Black girl identity, the data gathered in the study expressed how the co-researchers perceived themselves and how they believed they are seen. These perceptions have been analyzed and are categorized as the seven themes of Black girl identity. While each of these themes mirror aspects of Black feminism, there are three which are closely aligned with the BFT perspective – positive counterspace, self-definition, and resistance and activism.

Need for counterspace. One of the central findings of the Picture the Magic Photovoice Project suggested that Black girls require a place to gather where they can feel safe sharing their experiences. This need for communal gathering

among other Black women and girls is also a key facet of Black feminism. The photos and ideas from which positive counterspace theme emerged all revealed the co-researchers' need for a comfortable, benign space in which they could gather with other girls who share a similar lived experience. In Patrice's and Asha's images, the loneliness and frustration stemming from being the only or one of few Black girls in school and social settings are depicted. The narrative for *Sea of Whiteness* (Figure 28) explained Patrice's discomfort and lack of understanding that she feels when in being the only Black girl in many settings. Asha's image, *Odd One Out* (Figure 35), depicts her perception of isolation and difference, which she wrote, "Even though we're all people, it can feel like something is missing and that I am very different. It's like I am like the lonely pencil and just want to be with the pencils that are same as me." Both images convey need for a place for connection and affirmation of their identities.



Figure 35. Odd one out.

Creating counter narratives as self-definition. Another ideological underpinning of the Black feminist thought is to impede the social infrastructure

that upholds oppression and injustice based on gender, race and all other intersectional identities held by women (Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; Love 2016). BFT seeks to include the counternarrative knowledge, voice and lived experiences of Black women as valid among the academic and social discourse. Contributing to this study was the co-researchers' reflections on the tenets of Black feminism, as it empowered the girls to be the makers of knowledge. They were afforded an opportunity to challenge assumptions perpetuated by dominant society by creating a counternarrative in which they defined their own perspectives of Black girlhood. The photo collections and accompanying narratives serve not only as data in the current study, but also as implements of the humanization for Black girls. Rather than existing as stereotypical, figurative tropes; their ideas help to create a multifaceted picture of the totality of the Black girl's identity.

Toward resistance and activism. The ability to contest stereotypes or social stigma about Black women and girls a key aspect of the efforts of BFT (Crenshaw, 1989). The narratives captured by co-researchers distinctly communicated their desire to be free from judgement, not be a stereotype, and to be themselves. Nicole clearly emphasized this point as her narrative articulated, "People tend to let all of the different shades of colors of me go past them so they can focus on their stereotypes of me." Resistance and activism are the precepts of BFT, as it exists to challenge the systemic barriers of racial and misogyny that oppress Black women. Calling for a space of their own and to define themselves, are acts of resistance themselves. However, the findings also indicated that the co-researchers saw a need to help make positive change in the world. The titles for

some of Aisha's one of photos - *Resist, Persist & Prevail* - spoke to the co-researchers' overall established need for social change (Figures 36).



Figure 36. Resist, persist & prevail.

The Bridge to Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development contends that young people are shaped by the contextual life experiences, and it is imperative to create an environment that fosters resilience in young people so that they can overcome obstacles in their life that may impede positive growth (Leffert et al., 1998; Lerner, 2002; Pittman, 1999). As adolescents strive to master this stage of development, they are learning to understand their identity and social expectations in the context in which they find themselves. The PYD perspective maintains that young people will thrive when provided with an environment in which they acquire assets that allow them to work with caring adult role models, build positive relationships, use their voice, and make constructive contributions to their community (NCFY, 2007; Walker et al., 2005; "Risk and Protective Factors," n.d.). This inquiry's themes of *Unity and*

Connection, as well as *Blossoming Leadership* signified the overall contention of providing young people with an environment in which to cultivate positive developmental assets. The co-researchers' photos and narratives disclosed that they value and need to build connections and forge a sisterhood. Renee's photo of clasped hands, *Unity* (Figure 19), and its apt description, "Coming together with people around you will help you find and accept yourself. Seeing from different point of view can give you insight you may have never thought about before."

For Black adolescents, such as our co-researchers, whose lived experiences are at times comprised of racial bias and discrimination this implied they are challenged to grasp their changing bodies and social norms to find their sense of identity within the confines of systemic racial bias. An inadequacy of PYD is the failure to effectively address the additional effort required to provide a supportive environment to effectively circumnavigate the barriers faced by young people with marginalized identities, such as Black girls (Case, 2017; Hope et al., 2015; Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013; Travis & Leech, 2013). In the final PHOTO session, each of the girls shared that they would like to see a space like the one created for *Picture the Magic* be recreated on each of their high school campuses. They informed the principal research team that they never had an opportunity to be involved in something just for them that allowed them to talk about who they are and what mattered to them. It is apparent that setting the stage for their holistic empowerment will require composing a setting that nurtures growth with the building blocks of PYD but also recognizes the unique challenges of being a Black girl.

Black Girl Identity via Critical Youth Empowerment Lens (CYE)

CYE acknowledges that marginalized young people confront obstruction from bias and discrimination in their adolescent development. In a manner similar to PYD, CYE focuses on empowerment through youth-led activities and strategies and setting young people up with an environment where they can have healthy development (Eisman et al., 2016). However, the claims of CYE do not neglect the social barriers that marginalized young people face because of their social identities and makes room for them to engage in efforts geared toward social justice. This inquiry's resultant seven themes of Black girl identity characterized the facets of CYE which includes: (a) welcoming and safe environment; (b) meaningful engagement; (c) equitable power-sharing with youth; (d) critical awareness and reflection on social political processes; and (e) engagement in individual and community social change (Jennings et al., 2006). Table 5 shows how the seven themes of Black girl identity corresponded with the key conceptual elements of CYE. Most evident is how the ideas represented by each theme connected with the CYE concept of meaningful engagement, as they each are an illustration of the co-researchers' need to forge meaningful relationships that help them gain awareness of, explore, and celebrate their identity.

Welcoming safe environment. The themes of *Positive Counterspace*, *Unity and Connection*, and *Black Joy* are most clearly connected to the CYE elements of *Welcoming Safe Environment* as they are the essence of what was expressed by the data from which these themes were drawn. The setting eluded to in this element is characterized as an atmosphere for young people to feel comfortable with their identities with opportunities for positive growth (Case,

2017). The narrative account provided by Olivia expressed her perceived importance for Black girls to “connect and make meaningful relationships.” Candace’s data echo with a similar sentiment of the freedom from judgement felt when coming together with other Black girls.

Equitable power sharing. The idea of sharing power in an equitable manner with youth is an underlying facet not only of the entirety of this inquiry, but is also a CYE that purports the belief that youth have the capacity to create their own narratives and to make an impact in the world. The CYE element of *Equitable Power Sharing* corresponds with the *Self-Definition, Blossoming Leadership and Resistance and Activism* themes. Each emphasized the need for Black girls to lead the way in creating their own narrative and acting for positive social change in a manner that suits their needs, rather than go along with prescribed strategies. This spirit of independence and self-determination was expressed by each co-researcher but was exemplified in the data gathered by Nicole and Patrice. Nicole’s narrative spoke to the desire to break chains, while Patrice stated that she did not want others to label her in her narrative. These perceptions reflect the desire to be taken seriously and have agency over how they present themselves to the world. The girls also shared that they viewed themselves as role-models and leaders in bloom who wish to make positive social change.

Table 5
Themes of Black Girl Identity with Corresponding Key Elements of CYE

Theme	Description	Key Element of CYE
Positive Counterspace	Space and experiences where one can be authentic selves, with shared understanding of Black identity.	Welcoming Safe Environment & Meaningful Engagement
Self-Definition	The right to discover and determine who they are for themselves, rather than being subject to negative social labels and stereotypes.	Meaningful Engagement; Equitable Power Sharing & Critical Awareness and Social/Political Reflection
Cultural Awareness	An existing awareness of past and present social issues and their effect on Black culture. As well as a desire to learn more and share cultural awareness with others.	Meaningful Engagement; Critical Awareness & Social/Political Reflection
Unity & Connection	High value placed upon building and maintaining family and friend connections (sisterhood).	Meaningful Engagement & Critical Awareness and Social/Political Reflection
Black Joy	The desire for space and time enjoy being themselves and be carefree, without the worry of social identity.	Welcoming Safe Environment & Meaningful Engagement
Blossoming Leadership	The self-perception of selves as budding leaders, role models and activists.	Meaningful Engagement & Equitable Power Sharing
Resistance & Activism	A growing awareness of social injustices and desire to work toward equitable change.	Meaningful Engagement & Engagement in Social Change

Critical awareness and social/political awareness. The ideas behind the themes of *Self-Definition*, *Cultural Awareness*, and *Resistance and Activism* are closely tied to the CYE concept of critical awareness and social/political reflection. The function of a counterspace within the premise of CYE is to make space for young people to nurture their critical awareness of their marginalized identities and develop assets to be used toward positive social action (Case, 2017; Jennings et al., 2016). For Black girls, critical youth empowerment is represented as their need to gain an understanding of themselves as individuals, as a collective of Black girls, and to reflect upon their identities in the context of their lived social and political reality. In the anecdotal accounts of the co-researchers gathered from PHOTO

session feedback forms, there were multiple accounts of the desire to further embrace, learn more about, and celebrate their Black identity. Quotes from the anonymous forms that emphasize this element follow:

We need more time to be together and learn about our history. I really didn't know about the way research was done on us and the way it affects us. It's cool that now I get to be a researcher and change the negative from the past.

This comment demonstrated the co-researcher's growing awareness and continue curiosity to understand her identity in the context of historical social injustices incurred by Black people in the name of academic research. On another form a co-researcher reflected, "I feel like there is so much for us to learn. I want to learn more about our culture and Black history, so that I can really make a difference." The connections among the themes of Black girl identity and CYE which have been demonstrated lay the foundation for the understanding this inquiry's second guiding question exploring how the self-perceptions of Black girl identity can be developed into strategies of empowerment.

Recommended Holistic Youth Empowerment Strategies

This inquiry aimed to explore the ways that Black girls perceived themselves could be used to promote growth in their personal and cultural awareness and leadership capacity. The analysis and its emergent themes supported three core objectives of strategic focus that included: (a) school-based empowerment; (b) inspire personal growth; and (c) commemorate Black joy. These objectives were generated by the entire research team in the evaluative final PHOTO session, later refined by the principal investigator, and served as the source of the recommended empowerment strategies outlined in detail this section.

School-based Empowerment

This objective presented the opportunity for youth development workers and organizations as Magic Black Girls to provide young people with activity which creates a sense of safety and empowerment. Working with school administrators to gain support for extra-curricular activities and clubs that center on blackness is the crux of this objective. With much consideration, I presented two approaches to implement school-based empowerment. Providing an easy to follow template for Magic Black Girls clubs to be established in varied middle and high school settings, along with established points of contact to support the continuity of MBG ideals and persistence of the organization on campuses. Delivering a master set of guidelines and training for educators and students who wish to establish a MBG organization or host a themed event, would offer educational settings the chance to effectively work toward the encouragement and sense of belonging for their students. The use of a packaged set or guidelines was drawn by the co-researchers' concern for having their ideas overlooked, and the need to determine for themselves how best to meet their needs. In addition to, or along with, founding MBG entities on local school campuses, it is critical to provide guidance to schools seeking to have an equitable learning environment that does not isolate marginalized groups with equity outreach. This outreach would be in the form of consultation with appropriate administrators or club advisors to set-up events or to establish and sustain an MBG campus entity. The consultation would inform educators about the MBG holistic empowerment model and how to create its elements of positive space, positive relationships, and empowering experiences on their campus.

Inspiring Personal Growth

Inspiring personal growth was forged as an objective from the data that supported the need for Black girls to learn more about their culture, history, and explore a variety of personal development subjects such as spirituality, self-care, and sexuality. There is a myriad of ways to support the personal, social, cultural and leadership learning of young people. With so many possibilities, I used the HYE model as reference to generate suggested strategies reflective of this broad objective. I propose that personal growth learning can occur in most settings particularly when the elements of HYE are present. Youth development organizations could host an event, such as those offered for consideration by co-researchers, a formal dance, or a leadership conference. The formal dance may seem more like an activity that would be in accordance with the *Black Joy* objective, but it is relative to the current objective because it provides a learning opportunity. The sharing of power by engaging girls in the preparation and implementation of the event would afford them with event planning and leadership skills. The leadership conference, through its workshops, would provide avenues to absorb information on several cultural, historical, political, or common interest topics. However, being actively involved in the delivery of that content would offer even more personal growth opportunities by empowering girls to lead. In addition, such an event would support the likely forming of positive developmental relationships among leaders and participants during the process which aligns with the unity and connection theme. Thus, the only prescriptive suggestion offered for this objective was to inspire personal growth using the HYE model. Inspiring personal growth is the creation of personal, social, and cultural awareness

opportunities, which facilitate a welcoming atmosphere that encourages positive relationships and empowers through incorporating shared power with young people involved.

Commemorate Black joy. The co-researchers' articulated need to simply be themselves, be happy, and be unabashedly Black is what formed the basis of this objective about the celebration of Blackness. Using both the empowerment concepts from the literature and this inquiry's analysis, I submit that youth development organizations employ intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to implement this objective. The intrinsic approach involves honoring Black joy through implementing Black girl centered activities (targeting girls who identify with the Black ethnic/cultural experience) or interventions which aim to be a joyous counterspace for Black girls. The purpose of such events would be to bring Black girls together in an inclusive setting to make connections and to share common experiences. Such settings could include cultural and social events that are educational in nature. The extrinsic approach to implementation of Black joy interventions is to allow Black girls to share their identity proudly through learning to manage and produce fun activities. Having the opportunity to simply enjoy and absorb the positive energy of an inclusive space would offer an intrinsic satisfaction. Sharing power with young people to initiate a more public-facing celebration of Black identity through parades, festivals, or community social events would be expected to enhance their leadership capacity and bolster an extrinsic sense pride in their Black identity.

School-based empowerment is inclusive of the girls' expressed need for an opportunity to connect with other Black girls on their respective school campuses.

The objective of inspiring personal growth is in accordance with this study's findings and holds that Black girls desire to have a chance to learn more about themselves in a variety of ways. Commemorating Black joy further encompasses the ideas that were shared by co-researchers to celebrate being Black girls with multiple identities and interests, which they have defined for themselves. As Magic Black Girls advances its efforts of youth empowerment, these foci will serve as the strategic blueprint used to steer future expansion. Ways in which the findings and conclusions of this study can be expounded upon are presented as recommendations for future investigations in the section that follows.

Recommendations for Future Research

The information gathered through this investigation was insightful and innovative for its use of the actual meaning made from the lived experiences of Black girls to advance innovative approaches to provide a holistic and empowering form of guidance for them. The information while useful and supported by the theoretical underpinnings of the study is far from generalizable. The data, while important, is simply a reflection of the lived experiences of the seven girls who volunteered to participate in Picture the Magic. I recommend continued exploration of Black girl identity and methods of youth empowerment using repeated investigation to elicit more insight on the lived experiences of broader groups of participants.

Conducting the study with more participants, recruiting participants from a larger geographic region, or repeating photovoice projects with multiple groups across time to compare resultant themes are ways to gather data that may assist in elevating the public narrative around Black girl identity and inspiring a movement

to end bias and discrimination. By compiling more data to explore and triangulate the findings, future studies may be perceived to have more credibility. Adding research journals recorded by the co-researchers, interviews, and focus groups to the photovoice process to capture more first-hand, in vivo coding data may add richness to the quality of the data. In addition, if the current study were to be replicated, I suggest that any research assistants are provided with more extensive training and a structured outline to ensure more critically observant and reflective entries. The entries compiled may have provided more rich data if the research assistants were given guidance on how to capture their observations and bracket their own perceptions.

Each of the themes and the three core areas of focus that emerged from the investigation represent additional opportunities for study. Interventions based on individual themes could be evaluated for effectiveness or relevancy to the needs of participants who identify as Black girls. Interviews, surveys, or additional photovoice investigation on an individual theme are ways to further induce meaning from each. Case studies on the implementation of the three core, strategic focal points would render data about the application of the HYE model in various settings. Considering research aimed at capturing the perceptions of Black girlhood identity across generations offers another avenue to generate knowledge on the lived experiences of Black women and girls. This research could highlight and contrast the memories of older Black women with Black young women's current experiences. This would allow the often-silenced voice of Black women to be heard and to contribute to the formation of knowledge on Black womanhood.

Researcher Reflexivity

Advancing in the direction of the final recommendation for future research, this section offers further insight into researcher positionality and shares my voice as a Black woman exploring Black girl identity. In an effort to make known positionality of the principal research team, each of us took field notes in field journals and a discussion of the implications from the journals follows. These journals are where we logged any feelings or thoughts that arose as we guided co-researchers through the photovoice project. The information captured was used to assist in the data analysis as an additional source from which to corroborate the co-researchers accounts. The interaction among the entire research team during the photovoice project affected each of us, and the journals were the place to record the informal and unspoken aspects of the research process and understanding of our positionality and experience.

It was hoped that by providing the research assistants with an open-ended, non-structured prompt to observe portions of the PHOTO sessions that they were not in charge of directly facilitating, and to capture any additional feelings or thoughts they had about the research process, would generate detailed accounts. However, aside from my own journal, the fieldwork notes were primarily limited accounts of the research process. In my own notes, I amassed a sizeable number of entries that accounted for both observations of the research process and the bracketing of personal perceptions that became apparent over the course of the study. The notes of the assistants were primarily observations of the girls and did not capture any substantial reflection of their own perspective on the thoughts and images shared. Where significant information was provided on observed behavior

or noted statements were made, the information was added to the analytic discussion. While lacking in desired detail in many areas, the journals did, however, offer summative reflections which echoed the study's theme of self-definition. There were multiple entries deeming the work of the project as vital and shared awareness of how the identity of Black girls is often limited to only what is portrayed in the media which is "...misrepresented, and boxed into societal perception of what people think Black girls are." Despite the sparse recording of field notes, I did observe that the research assistants facilitated their groups by encouraging the co-researchers to expound on their thoughts, rather than taking over the conversations with recollection of their own experiences as Black girls. The most significant account provided was from my own observations and is detailed in the following section.

Personal Reflections

As this project was ultimately about the creation of a leadership organization, it was imperative that I documented this unique process as a part of my personal leadership journey. The process of carrying out this inquiry not only served the purpose to provide further insight into the development of Black girl leadership, but it also has created the opportunity for my personal leadership development as a researcher and leader of MBG. My identity as a Black woman was central to the purpose of this study investigating and designing interventions to support the growth of Black girls. This study was conducted from a participatory, insider perspective that allowed me to use my identity and shared cultural capital to create connection with participants. A rich personal development opportunity lays in the shared cultural connection with participants who served as researchers and with

potential to lead the charge of program development. The assumptions of BFT and photovoice support that the findings, inclusive of my observations as principal investigator, of the project serve as a valid source of knowledge that contributes to the body of knowledge on the identity and empowerment of Black girls.

In preparation for *Picture the Magic*, I began to record ideas and insight that came to the forefront of my thoughts. In the days immediately prior to the training, it became apparent that I should develop a unique set of introductory icebreaker activities. Initially, the plan was to duplicate pre-planned activities from sources informing on the process of photovoice. However, as I considered the adaptations that were made to the process to accommodate for time constraints for the project's timeline, it became clearer that additional adjustments to the process should be considered. Noting the few opportunities that I could recall having as a younger Black girl to recognize or to have meaningful conversations about any aspect of being Black, I decided to be intentional in creating a space for the co-researchers to do this from the start. As such, I worked with the research assistants to provide the girls with team building exercises that would bring the idea of Blackness to the forefront. I continued to adjust the process as necessary, which is standard for action research process of planning, action, observing, reflecting and adjusting. As adjustments were made, I wanted also wanted to be in alignment with the concepts of CYE which forms the basis of holistic youth empowerment. I attempted to achieve this alignment by checking in with the research team and co-researchers about the impending changes for feedback and continuing as appropriate. This check-in was a deliberate effort to share power with all contributors to the research project.

One of the biggest fears that I held in proceeding with the research was that this research may be dismissed as self-serving and invalid because it had few participants, and two of them were my own daughters. I took time to reflect on this and came to the realization that the theoretical framework of the entire project would place value upon inclusion of their data, as it still provided a unique perspective of Black girl identity worth of consideration. Even with coming to this conclusion, I decided to allow for some separation from my children and the second set of sister participants during the research process. At the start of the training, I spoke with my daughters and the other set of sisters about the concern and advised that we all work in separate groups where possible. We all agreed that it would offer everyone to the chance to share things more freely. I was pleasantly surprised to see my own daughters offer impactful insight on the data presented and group conversations. They were each able to make powerful observations without relying on me to validate what they shared in the group and narratives.

In conversations that took place during various activities, I felt that I sometimes refrained from sharing the entirety of experiences that I had in common with the girls. I felt myself becoming emotional in recounting a tale of being taunted on the playground in elementary school by a student who yelled, "Slavery! Slavery! Go back to slavery!" I used this example to prompt the girls to dig deeper and share how they have been viewed by others and I failed to realize the emotions that I still had attached to the incident. It seemed that my sharing that example in brief generated conversation, but looking back I wonder if I may have served as a greater example by allowing myself to become more fully involved in my emotions surrounding this memory. Another striking aspect of this incident was how

emotionally tied I still was to that memory, which I had basically suppressed until that moment. The fact that over 30 years after that encounter with racial bias having never shared with anyone allowed the pain to linger. This underscores the belief that having opportunity to recount experiences and our feelings are overdue. I pondered the necessity of fully bracketing ourselves, as researchers, from sharing such occurrences in conversations.

My overall conclusion from observing the interactions that took place during the project is that the project was the epitome of holistic youth empowerment. The establishing of group norms or agreements was a demonstration of shared power and the foundation for the establishment of a safe counterspace. Engaging the girls in a variety interactive exercises to impart the need for knowledge to carry out the project also gave them time to form bonds with each other. The training and supplemental PHOTO session workshops served to increase co-researchers' personal and cultural awareness. The project was an empowering experience for the co-researchers as they were entrusted to conduct fieldwork in response to the prompts and analyze their own data.

I was impressed by the amount of commitment shown by each co-researcher for the duration of the project and beyond. While the monetary incentive may have been enticing to the girls at first, it was probably not what led them to persist. I noticed a sense of comradery grew with each PHOTO session. As the girls became more open and comfortable sharing aspects of themselves with the group, they revealed unique aspects of themselves and sensitive information like sexual orientation identity. The safe, counterspace that was formed in the bounds of

Picture the Magic became a place where positive relationships formed between peers and caring adults.

Again, the project resonated with the theories of positive youth development and empowerment which guided this study. In this positive structured activity, the girls were able to be of service to the community and develop protective assets, such as a strong positive regard, the clarification of values, and future goal orientation. In addition to the motivation and learning in which the co-researchers were engaged, there was a sense of inspiration and accomplishment expressed by them. Having the ability to witness the complex emotions shared, poignant pictures taken to represent their Black girl identity, and the growth of the girls has also helped each of the adults that were in the room to grow as well. For me, I believe that I became more seated in my Black womanhood by allowing myself to let my inner Black girl know that her experience was both unique and shared by others like her. Most importantly, I could let her know that it was ok to love herself, exactly as she was. It seems that in my effort to discover the best ways to create effective methods to empower and develop the aptitude for leadership among Black girls, a powerful approach for empowerment was found in the photovoice project itself.

Summary

This investigation was designed to explore the identity perceptions of Black girls in an effort to devise strategies for developing their own holistic empowerment. The question central to the Picture the Magic Photovoice project “What’s it Like to be a Black Girl?” was used to ascertain information relevant to the study’s actual guiding questions which were: How do Black girls perceive their

personal and social identities? and “How the self-perceptions of Black young women might be used to form holistic empowerment strategies for youth development organizations such as Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute?” The findings illustrate the perceptions of Black girls ages 14 to 18 years old about what it is like to be Black girls. Their stories are told through the data gathered in the photovoice research that consisted of pictures, written narratives, process feedback and researcher observations. The research provided data supporting that the elements of holistic youth empowerment model are essential to the development of Black girl identity.

Co-researchers shared valuable insight on their lived experiences to contribute to an understanding of Black girl identity that reflected personal and social self-perceptions. Their data depicted their personalities, interests, connections, frustrations, obligations, values and beliefs manifested in the seven themes of Black girl identity: (a) Positive Counterspace, (b) Self-Definition, (c) Cultural Awareness, (d) Unity and Connection, (e) Black Joy, (f) Blossoming Leadership, and (g) Resistance and Activism. These themes represented the entirety of what was articulated via the data and apparent in its analysis of what the co-researchers believed it was like to be Black girls. The explanation of lived experiences of Black girls, as borne in this study’s themes were discovered to be interconnected to the elements of holistic youth empowerment.

The association to the fundamental theories which shape the HYE model each have common elements that were realized in the data gathered by the co-researchers. An encouraging counterspace, connection, critical awareness, supportive relationships, the freedom to be culturally authentic, the development of

assets, and experiencing shared power are the universal elements that were found across the data and the study's conceptual HYE framework. Building upon this connection, there were three core strategic approaches offered as was to promote holistic empowerment that included: (a) school-based empowerment; (b) inspiring personal growth; and (c) commemorating Black joy. A suggested approach was presented for each strategic focal point. These approaches include providing structured guidance for the development of positive counterspaces in schools, such as Magic Black girls student organizations and events, implementing enrichment opportunities that allow Black girls to learn about themselves through a variety of topics in a holistic empowered setting, and providing the space to be authentic and celebration Black culture and identity.

Magic Black Girls was conceived to empower Black girls to create their own space to grow, become personally aware of their own worth, and stand in their own power. From the findings of this study, it appears that the original aims of the organization were parallel to the needs and lived experiences shared by the Black girls who participated this project. The perceptions of what it's like to be a Black girl unveiled a call for conversations, connection, and bonding across the dynamic of Black girlhood. Their stories revealed that centered on the needs of Black girls serve as a form of empowerment. In these spaces, Black girls can feel encouraged, become critically aware, challenge racial stereotypes, develop skills that empower them to become define their own path to womanhood, and impact positive social change. Coming of age when there is a rise in the occurrence of issues such as adultification that leads to school push-out, or disproportionate, severe punishment for school infractions among Black girls; as well as the potential health risks of

increased allostatic load of racism has on the bodies of Black people it is imperative that ways for young people to overcome such challenges are addressed. Based on the principles of critical youth empowerment, critical consciousness of one's racial identity can serve as a protective factor to promote optimal development.

Exploring what life is like for Black girls and making meaning from their lived experiences can inform the formation of environments that foster holistic empowerment, which may serve as assets that assist Black girls in learning to circumvent the obstacles of racism and bias that may complicate their adolescence.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute



Picture the Magic:

A PHOTOVOICE PROJECT 

Seeking co-researchers, girls ages 14 - 18 years old, to
make social change through art

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A BLACK GIRL?

Tell us your story using photos!

Earn community service hours by participating in this fun project!
You don't have to be a photographer or even have a camera to join.
Your photos will help break down barriers, identify your concerns
and be used to guide the work of Magic Black Girls.

Information Session on ___ 2019
RSVP @ MagicBlackGirls.com

Participants will be given photo equipment &
\$100 gift card upon completion of the research project.

SHARE YOUR VOICE!!





POLAROID CAMERA

SUPPORTED BY:





A PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

What's it like to be a Black Girl?

The Magic Black Girls Picture the Magic Photovoice Project is an 10-week research project that helps raise community awareness about the experiences of Black young women. Tell your story in photos to help break down barriers and shape the ways that Magic Black Girls works to improve our community.

Want to be a co-researcher? Here are the requirements...

- Co-researchers must be female high school students 14 - 18 years old
- Attend Info Session & get parental consent
- Complete Training Sessions
- Create 3 photo collections & submit by deadline
- Attend PHOTO Analysis Sessions

Photovoice is a hands-on, grass roots research that allows groups who are rarely given a voice to record their lives as they see it. As a co-researcher you will take photos and discuss with your peers what it is like to be a Black girl. Photos selected by you will be added to our online gallery that will be used to shape the work of Magic Black Girls in the community.

Information Session on ____, 2019
RSVP @ MagicBlackGirls.com

**SHARE YOUR
VOICE!!**

Participants will be given
photo equipment & \$100 gift card
upon completion of the research project.

**NO
EXPERIENCE
NECESSARY!**



PICTURE THE MAGIC- A photovoice project

Verbal Recruitment Script

Hello, may I have a moment of your time to share an opportunity with you? Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute, supported by University of the Pacific, is conducting *Picture the Magic- A Photovoice Project*. It is a 10-week research project that helps raise community awareness about the experiences of Black young women. Selected co-researchers will tell their own story in photos to help shape the ways that Magic Black Girls works to improve our community.

Designed in the 1990's Photovoice is research method that gives a voice to people who have traditionally had little power or opportunity to express their views about their own experiences and communities. It gives young people, like yourself, the ability to find their voice and tell their story with the goal of influencing important decision makers using art. The use of photography helps break barriers by showing community members and decision makers your reality. Through photovoice you will have the chance to learn more about yourself, gain an understanding of what's going on in your community, and begin to take steps to make positive change to improve your experience and community.

We are seeking co-researchers, girls ages 14 - 18 years old, to answer the question: "What's it like to be a Black girl?" It's fun project where you get to tell us your story in photos. There's no experience or cameras necessary and training and equipment will be provided.

There are some great benefits you can gain by joining *Picture the Magic*, like:

- ◆ You can earn community service hours and valuable research experience
- ◆ You will receive a research certification of completion
- ◆ You can meet new and exciting people in the community
- ◆ You will make friends with other Magic Black Girls
- ◆ Your art will be displayed in our gallery (online and in-person)
- ◆ You get free MBG swag
- ◆ We feed you great snacks at every meeting
- ◆ Earn a \$100 Visa gift card
- ◆ Plus, keep your photo equipment!

All you have to do is...

Attend Info Session & get parental consent, complete training sessions, create 3 photo collections & submit by deadline, and attend PHOTO Analysis Sessions

Would you like to help us Picture the Magic? Please check out the requirements and fill out an interest form online at MagicBlackGirls.com

APPENDIX B: INFO ORIENTATION MATERIALS



YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (YPAR)

YPAR is an innovative approach to positive youth development that trains young people to conduct research that improves their lives, their communities, and the institutions intended to serve them. YPAR is a process of learning and action. We conduct research to generate solutions to problems that young people themselves care about. YPAR can be useful for any young people wanting to make a difference, and is an especially powerful approach for young people who are experiencing marginalization due to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, or other forms of oppression. (Adapted from YPAR HUB, 2018)

WHAT IS PICTURE THE MAGIC?

The Magic Black Girls Picture the Magic Photovoice Project is an 10-week research project that helps raise community awareness about the experiences of Black young women. Selected co-researchers will tell the of their own story of what it's like to be a Black girl in photos to help break down barriers and shape the ways that Magic Black Girls works to improve our community.

WHY ARE WE RESEARCHING?

Magic Black Girls is designed to empower girls to become leaders. In order to grow into a strong youth-led organization that meets the needs of Black girls, we must know what it's like to be a Black girl. MBG views young people as resources and respect the contribution young people can make to planning, operation, and evaluation of our organization. We need you to tell your stories and let us know what's working or not, so that together we can make change that improve our community.

READY TO BE A RESEARCHER?

- Co-researchers must be girls 14 - 18 years old
- Attend Info Session & get parental consent
- Complete Training Sessions
- Create 3 photo collections & submit by deadline
- Attend PHOTO Analysis Sessions

Would you like to help us Picture the Magic?
Register now or fill out an interest form
online at MagicBlackGirls.com



BENEFITS

- Earn community service hours and valuable research experience
- Receive a research certification of completion
- Meet new and exciting people in the community
- Make friends with other Magic Black Girls
- Your art will be displayed in our gallery (online and in-person)
- Get free MBG swag
- Great snacks at every meeting
- Earn a \$100 Visa gift card & keep your photo equipment!



APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT & ASSENT FORMS

BENERD SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**CONSENT FOR MINOR RESEARCH SUBJECT TO PARTICIPATE IN
RESEARCH*****PICTURE THE MAGIC- A photovoice project*****Research project conducted by: Leha A. Hawkins, Doctoral Candidate****Faculty Advisors: Martin Martinez & Rod Githens****RESEARCH DESCRIPTION**

Your child has been invited to participate in this research study on the experiences of being a Black young woman. The purpose of the project is to empower Black young women by training them to use photography to tell the stories of their lived experiences. The information gathered will help shape future community action work carried out by Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Your child will be asked to respond to questions that describe what it is like to be a Black girl. She will be provided with photo equipment to capture a collection of 3 – 8 photos in response to research questions. As a co-researcher, my daughter will be required to participate in both an informational session and training [which will cover safety and technical protocols]. Should you or your child choose not to complete project requirements, then she may elect to stop participating in the research project without consequence.

While participating in this project your child may discuss themes, ideas, feelings about the photo collections and the research experience which may be of a sensitive nature. Your child will be taking photographs that will be used by *MAGIC BLACK GIRLS* for public display and discussion. Your child may be photographed or recorded in group discussions that may be used for research and/or data collection methods.

The co-researchers will select which photos if any they desire to release for use in the *Picture the Magic* project. Photographs captured and released for use may be used for promotional purposes and furtherance of the *PICTURE THE MAGIC* photovoice project and programs development of Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Participation in this project will take place over the course of approximately 10 weeks (based on participant availability). There will be approximately 4 scheduled training/analysis sessions that will take approximately 20 hours. Photography sessions will vary in the amount of time taken by each co-researcher but are

estimated to take approximately 10 hours. Total estimated time commitment is 30 - 33 hours for the duration of the project.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

The risks associated with this study are minimal in nature. Your child may express negative feelings that arise from the research experience and/or discussion of thematic issues that arise from the photos. Any sensitive issues that arise and are expressed will be kept confidential and only discussed using pseudonyms, except if any co-researcher reports neglect or harm which will be reported to appropriate authorities. There is also minimal risk of accidental physical injury while capturing photos for their collection, if safety protocols are not followed.

The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study are the development of a sense of pride in their own identity as well as increased self-esteem and empowerment. Co-researchers may also benefit from receiving community service hours and research experience that may support future academic and career goals. While these benefits are possible, we cannot and do not guarantee or promise that your child will receive any benefit from this study.

PARTICIPATION

We expect to have 8 - 10 participants take part in this study. There is no cost to you for your child to participate in this study.

Your decision whether to allow your child to participate in this study will not affect your child's grades or participation in school and will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which you or your child are otherwise entitled. If you decide to allow your child to participate, you are free to discontinue your child's participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you or your child are otherwise entitled.

COLLECTION OF INFORMATION:

Your child's private identity information [name, address, DOB, school/grade level, and parental demographics] will be stored separate from her photo collection which will be assigned numeric markers and assigned pseudonyms. This private information will be stored on a password protected server in the researcher's office for a period of three years and will not be used for any additional research.

COMPENSATION

Your child will receive a \$100 gift credit card and allowed to keep assigned photo equipment in consideration for her full participation. She will receive her compensation at the conclusion of the final photo analysis session.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

If you have read this form and have decided to allow your minor child to participate in this research project, please understand that your child's participation is entirely voluntary and your decision whether to allow her to

participate will involve no penalty. Your child is also free to withdraw her assent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which she is otherwise entitled. Even if you give permission for your child to participate, the Lead Researcher or another member of the Research Team will speak with your child to confirm your child assents to participate in the research study. If you decide to allow your child to participate, you are free to discontinue her participation at any time without penalty.

Your child has the right to refuse to answer questions. Your child will be the owner of her photo collections and has the right to select which photos to release for use in the project and to change her mind at any time. The results of this research study may be presented at professional meetings, community stakeholder events, or published as a part of dissertation requirements and/or research journals.

It is possible that we may decide that your child's participation in this research is not appropriate. If that happens, your child will be dismissed from the study. In any event, we appreciate your willingness to allow your child to participate in this research. [Research dismissal is rare but may be done in situations where co-researchers violate safety rules or agreed upon guidelines.]

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will take reasonable steps to keep confidential any information that is obtained in connection with this research study and that can be identified with your child. Measures to protect your child's confidentiality include: No real names will be used in any reports, records of private information will be stored on a password protected server in the Lead Researcher's private office to which no other parties associated with this project have access. This information will be de-identified and limited links to consent forms will be stored. Upon conclusion of the research study, the data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked or otherwise secured location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the research is completed.

With your permission, your child's identity will be made known in association with visual and written materials prepared directly by them for the study. If you prefer to not have your child's identity revealed as a co-researcher, then she will be assigned a pseudonym to be attached to collected.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact:

Lead Researcher, Leha Hawkins [l_hawkins2@u. pacific. edu/415-562-4425],
or Faculty Research Advisor, Martin Martinez [916-215-3231], or Faculty
Research Advisor, Rod Githens [916.739.7332/ rgithens@pacific.edu].

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your child's rights as a participant, please contact Office of Research and Sponsored Programs to speak to someone independent of the research team at (209)-946-3903 or IRB@pacific.edu.

Note: In the event of an emergency or your child sustaining physical injury while participating in the study please report directly to lead researcher or IRB administrator immediately.

I hereby consent for my minor child: (Indicate **Yes** or **No**)

- To be photographed during this study.
☐ Yes ☐ No
- For such photographic records resulting from this study to be used for researcher's analysis of discussion group themes:
☐ Yes ☐ No
- For my child's identity to be disclosed in written or visual materials/oral presentations resulting from this study:
☐ Yes ☐ No

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you have been afforded the opportunity to ask, and have answered, any questions that you may have, that you completely volunteer to permit your child to participate in the research study (if your child assents to such participation), that you understand that your child may withdraw his/her assent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

Name of Child (Please Print)

Signature(s) of Parent(s), Guardian or Authorized Representative

Date

Printed Name of Parent(s), Guardian or Authorized Representative

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.



PICTURE THE MAGIC- A photovoice project

Minor Participant Assent Form

You are invited to participate as a co-researcher in the *Picture the Magic* photovoice project. Photovoice gives a voice to young people, who usually have limited power due to their age. By being involved in *Picture the Magic* you will have the power to tell your story of what it is like being a Black girl with the community. Your story is very important information and any concerns that you share may be used to help Magic Black Girls plan programs and activities.

You will be given photo equipment to take photographs that will be used by *Magic Black Girls* to help understand the experiences and needs of Black girls. The photos you take belong to me and you have the right to select which photos to release for use in the project. Photos that you choose will be used for discussion and displayed to the community. The project will take place over 8-weeks, but you can stop participation at any time. If you have any questions about the project, discussions, or whether you want to continue with the project just ask the research team.

Lead Researcher: Leha Hawkins lhawkins2@u.pacific.edu, 415-562-4425

You may also be photographed or recorded in group discussions that may be used for research and/or data collection methods. These photographs and/or recordings may be used for promoting *Picture the Magic* photovoice project and *Magic Black Girls*.

Signing this form means that you understand what the project is about and are willing to become a co-researcher in the *Picture the Magic* photovoice project with *Magic Black Girls*.

Signature of minor participant

Printed name of participant

Date

APPENDIX D: RESEARCH ASSISTANT CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT



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PACIFIC



PICTURE THE MAGIC- A photovoice project

Confidentiality Agreement: For Research Participants, Research Assistants, or Transcribers

I _____ (please print first and last name)
understand that the information that I will read and/or hear in the photo analysis discussion
groups, audio recordings or transcripts may be of a sensitive nature. I will keep confidential any
information concerning the information contained in the interview audio recording or
transcript.

Signature of Researcher Participant, Research Assistant, or Transcriber

Printed name

Date

APPENDIX E: REGISTRATION INFORMATION



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PICTURE THE MAGIC- A photovoice project

Co-researcher Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for volunteering to be a co-researcher for *Picture the Magic*. The Magic Black Girls research team is excited to have you on board. Please take a moment to complete this Information Sheet.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Date of Birth: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

For MBG RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

- ☐ Consent
- ☐ Assent
- ☐ Release
- ☐ Questionnaire
- ☐ Commitment

CR# _____



UNIVERSITY OF THE
PACIFIC



PICTURE THE MAGIC- A photovoice project

Participant Questionnaire

Date:

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about our photovoice co-researchers this will give us a better idea of where you are coming from. Some of the questions at the start are a bit personal because we want to find make sure that we fully understand the young people we are working with. Please be assured that this information is anonymous and will not be tied to you or your photographs. Please answer as honestly as possible so we can learn more about who is coming to the program.

Personal Background

What is your age?

___ 14 ___ 15 ___ 16 ___ 17 ___ 18

What grade are you in?

___ 9th ___ 10th ___ 11th ___ 12th

Where do live?

_____ City _____ County

What do you hope that your child will gain from being part of *Picture the Magic*?

Any worries or concerns about being part of *Picture the Magic*?



UNIVERSITY OF THE
PACIFIC



PICTURE THE MAGIC- A photovoice project

Acknowledgement of Photo Release

I, _____, grant *Magic Black Girls*, its representatives and employees the right use photographs that I have taken for *Picture the Magic* photovoice project. I understand that I may select the photos to be released for use and may decline use of any photograph at any time. *Magic Black Girls* are free to use the photos I have selected and may publish the photographs in print and/or electronically or display for research and promotional purposes.

I have read and agree to the above:

Signature of minor participant

Printed name of participant

Date

Signature of parent or guardian

Printed name of parent or guardian

Date



UNIVERSITY OF THE
PACIFIC



PICTURE THE MAGIC- A photovoice project

Parent/Guardian Questionnaire

Date:

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about the families of our photovoice co-researchers this will give us a better idea of where they are coming from. Some of the questions at the start are a bit personal because we want to find make sure that we fully understand the young people we are working with. Please be assured that this information is anonymous and will not be tied to you or y your child. Please answer as honestly as possible so we can learn more about who is coming to the program.

Personal Background

How do you identify?

☐ male

☐ female

or _____

What is your age?

☐ < 25

☐ 35 – 40

☐ 55 - 60

☐ 25 – 30

☐ 40 – 45

☐ 60 - 65

☐ 30 – 35

☐ 45 – 50

☐ > 65

What is your marital status?

☐ Single

☐ Married

☐ Separated/Divorced

Where do you live?

☐ Own your own home

☐ With family

☐ Rent an apartment/condo/house

What is your highest level of education?

☐ Grade school (K-8)

☐ Technical training certificate

☐ 2-year college degree

☐ High school diploma

☐ Some college or university

☐ 4-year college/university degree

☐ Graduate degree



What is your current working situation?

- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Paid, full time work
- ☐ Paid, part time work
- ☐ Volunteer work
- ☐ Student (full or part-time)
- ☐ Retired

What do you hope that your child will gain from being part of *Picture the Magic*?

Any worries or concerns about your child being part of *Picture the Magic*?

APPENDIX F: TRAINING MATERIALS

**WHAT IS PHOTOVOICE?**

Photovoice is a participatory action research methodology created by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris in the early 1990's designed to give a voice to people who have traditionally had little power or opportunity to express their views about their own experiences and communities. Photovoices gives young people like yourself the ability to tell their story and influence important decision makers with their art. The use of photography helps break barriers by showing community members and decision makers your reality. Through photovoice you will have the chance to learn more about yourself, gain an understanding of what's going on in your community, and begin to take steps to make positive change to improve your experience and community.

WHAT IS PICTURE THE MAGIC?

The Magic Black Girls Picture the Magic Photovoice Project is an 8-week research project that helps raise community awareness about the experiences of Black young women. Selected co-researchers will tell the of their own story in photos to help break down barriers and shape the ways that Magic Black Girls works to improve our community.

**YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

Photovoice is what as known a participatory action research tool. When used with young people it is called youth participatory action research (YPAR). YPAR seeks to empower young people learn to think critically about their identity, understand their life experiences, and learn to influence community change.

**PHOTOVOICE GOALS:**

1. Record and reflect the concerns and realities of communities
2. Promote encourage critical discussion about identified issues
3. Reach those who influence systems and make policy that affect the lives of participants



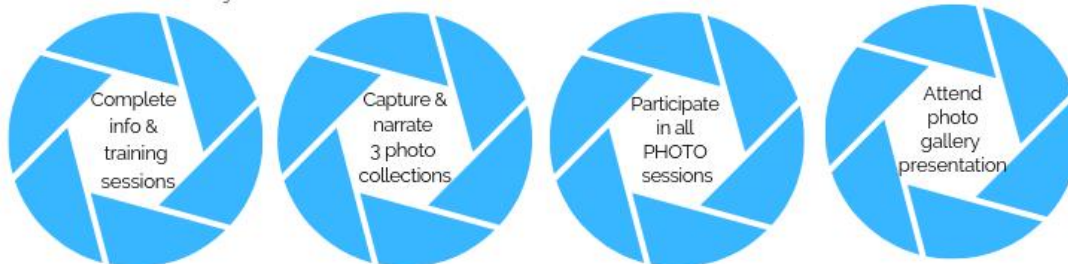
Picture the Magic

A PHOTOVOICE PROJECT



WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

As a selected co-researcher participating in Picture the Magic photovoice research, you should always be honest, respectful, safe, genuine, focused on telling your story and addressing important issues in your life and community. There are four major commitments over the course of 2 months:



WHAT CAN I TAKE PICTURES OF?

When participating in photovoice, you as the co-researcher, have can capture a photo of whatever you feel will address the given issue or theme. However, you are responsible for following the **4 ethical considerations** below to ensure that you are following measures that protect yourself and the participants involved.

1. INFORMED CONSENT

Consent (or permission) must be given by those you wish to photograph (from adults and minors) to use the photos for the project and promotional purposes, to take the pictures in private homes or business, and of anyone who is identifiable in your photographs.

2. PROTECT PARTICIPANTS

You must protect yourself and others from harm. Participants must not enter dangerous spaces/situations to complete the project. Think not only about danger in terms of physical harm, but also in emotional harm, harm to individual reputation, or potential financial harm.

3. PROTECT THE COMMUNITY

It is important to protect others by not taking any pictures that may harm their reputation, safety, or violate their rights.

4. FALSE LIGHT

You are encouraged to be symbolic but you must be careful to truthfully reflect situations and avoid taking pictures that can be misunderstood when taken out of context.



Picture the Magic

A PHOTOVOICE PROJECT



PHOTOGRAPHY GUIDELINES

As a co-researcher you are representing not only yourself but The University of the Pacific and Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute and you must always conduct yourself in a respectful manner and keep yourself and others safe. Here are the guidelines for researching with Picture the Magic.

BE SAFE

- Safety first & don't take any risks.
- Don't go anywhere you wouldn't usually go, or do anything you wouldn't usually do.
- Take a your parent, a friend or group of co-researchers.
- Be aware of what's around you.
- In the unlikely event that you are confronted by someone aggressively (i.e. address the possibility of being robbed), stay calm, do not resist and give up the photo equipment. Call 9-1-1, your parents and contact the lead researcher, Leha Hawkins immediately. 415-562-4425

BE RESPECTFUL

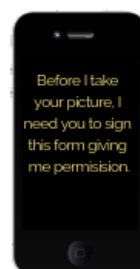
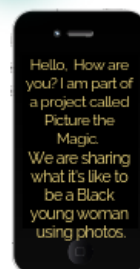
- Be kind and polite
- Always ask first, even if this means missing the perfect shot.
- You must have permission before taking pictures of people.
- Remember, the goal is to connect capture your story and connect with the community. Don't upset people because it puts the whole project at risk.

BE CREATIVE

- Consider taking pictures of scenery, landscaping, large crowds and inanimate objects.
- You do not need a Release Form if people are too small to be recognizable.
- It is still a good idea to ask permission before taking a picture of private property (someone's house or yard, for example).
- Challenge yourself to find unique ways to tell your story without your own image, or the images of other people.

BE MINDFUL

- Remember the 4 Ethical Considerations and have subjects sign a Release Form before taking any pictures.
- Be especially careful when taking pictures of children. Talk to the parents first, and have a parent sign a Release Form.
- Do not take pictures of people who are "in private", such as through a window into their home.
- Ask yourself, "Would I mind if someone took a picture of me in this situation?"
- Remember to offer to email a copy of the picture.



Picture the Magic

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!



Aisha

Thank you so much for participating in Picture the Magic. Together we will explore "What's it Like to be a Black Girl?" We will be asking you to use photography to explore Black girl identity, in other words, what is like to be you!

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

Here's how it works. You will be given 3 prompts and as you move through your everyday activities at school, at home, studying, socializing, etc. if you see something that answers the prompt, you take a picture. For example, if the prompt was about how you stay physically well, you go to lunch and have a delicious, fresh salad. A photo of that salad would make a great submission.

For each prompt, you can take up to 10-12 photographs. You will submit your photographs to info@magicblackgirls.com and note which prompts you are addressing with the photographs in the subject line. So if you take 9 pictures in response to prompt #2, then you will email info@magicblackgirls.com and for the subject use PTM#2.

PHOTO ANALYSIS SESSIONS

STEP ONE

At our first PHOTO session we will discuss prompt #1. You will use the PHOTO worksheets found in your research materials to capture your thoughts for each of the photos you submitted. You may want to take notes or start filling out the worksheets as you take the pictures so that you don't forget the reason you decided to take the photos.

STEP TWO

During the session we will follow a format similar to the one we practiced today in training. You'll complete (if you haven't already done so) the worksheets and discuss in small groups. A member of the principal research team will work with you to narrow down your 12 photos to just 6.

STEP THREE

When everyone has just 6, then we will come together to discuss using the PHOTO process. In this group discussion, you will be prompted to think critically about your selection and receive feedback from the rest of the team. At the end of the discussion, you will narrow your collection again to just 3 to represent your response to the prompt. You will then label, describe, and caption your collection.

STEP FOUR

We will wrap up the PHOTO session with another group discussion. After taking a moment to look at each researcher's collection, then we will talk further about the commonalities and themes that we notice in the data. This information will be captured by the principal research team and used to help us brainstorm any necessary action steps.



Picture the Magic

A PHOTOVOICE PROJECT



Keep this handy!

FIELDWORK REMINDERS

- Photographs may not contain any illegal activity/content
- Photos should not be edited
- Filters should not be used
- If people are included in photographs, you must get verbal permission to take their photo
- Follow the ASK script and give them an information sheet
- No ASK required for huge crowds of people whose faces may not be identifiable
- Don't present people in a false light
- Protect yourself and the community
- Follow safety guidelines at all times
- Have fun!



Remember to ask for permission

- Taking a picture of someone who is recognizable (faces, tattoos, or markings)
- Taking a picture minors (under 18 years)
- Taking a picture of personal belongings and/or personal property

No need to ask for permission when

- Taking a picture of public figures
- Taking a picture of the environment or public settings
- Taking a picture of people who cannot be specifically identified

TIPS FOR TAKING GREAT PHOTOS!

- Keep sunlight at your back when taking photos outdoors or near windows
- Use a flash when necessary
- Capture the entire scene you would like to photograph
- Photos may be landscape or portrait
- Be as creative as you like
- Respond to the prompts in any way you would like with photographs

In case of emergency, call 9-1-1
For other urgent concerns
Leha Hawkins
916-775-3370



Picture the Magic

A PHOTOVOICE PROJECT



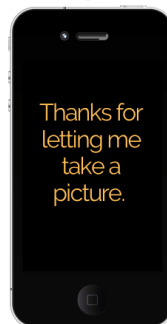
PHOTO SUBJECT INFORMATION

Thank you for allowing me to take a picture of you and/or your property. I am conducting research for Magic Black Girls Leadership Institute and University of the Pacific. We are using a method called Photovoice to create a community art project which uses photography to describe the experiences. Picture the Magic project focuses on the topic of Black young women's identity.

Please understand that images of your likeness and/or property may be used in a public setting and displayed indefinitely. While your name and information will not be collected or provided, it is possible that others viewing the pictures may recognize you. Images for this project may be shown in gallery displays, presentations and publication online for promotional purposes surrounding the PICTURE THE MAGIC photovoice project.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the use of your likeness, you may contact:

Lead Researcher,
Leha Hawkins, L_hawkins2@u.pacific.edu/916-775-3370,
or Faculty Research Advisor,
Martin Martinez 916-215-3231,
or Faculty Research Advisor,
Rod Githens 916.739.7332
rgithens@pacific.edu



Facilitating PHOTO Analysis

Part 1- Individual Analysis

Total Time 45 minutes

You will meet 1-on-1 with each to discuss the photos as/after they complete the worksheet. Each segment of the grid should be a point of discussion. Have them describe the photo (exactly what it is in the scene) and tell you what is happening (this is where you prompt them to give meaning to the image). Next, have the co-researcher explain why they took it and what/how it represents who they are as Black girls. Ask them which of the photos best shows who they are, and keep prompting them to narrow it based on their own opinions. Spend 10-15 minutes with each co-researcher.

The goal of the discussion is to cut the number of photos in half. At the end of the 45 minutes they should have completed worksheets, narrowed the pictures to 6, emailed the narrowed selection w/subject PTM #1- top 6, and be ready to share photos with the group.

Guide the researchers in the discussion by prompting them if they get stuck describing, telling what is happening or why they took the photo. Ask them “what does the picture represent?” Or ask “how does it show how you see yourself/who you are?”

P	Describe your <i>picture</i> ?
H	What is <i>happening</i> in your picture?
O	Why did you take a picture <i>of</i> this?
T	What does this picture <i>tell</i> us about your experience as a Black woman?
O	What <i>opportunities</i> for improving your well-being or the community are revealed by this photo?

Part 2- Group Analysis

Total Time 45 minutes

Each co-researcher will have 2 minutes to present their photos to the whole team and share the points from their worksheets for the photos. The team will have 3 minutes to provide feedback on what they see/don't see in the photos (themes, things they can relate to, how it makes them feel) and to ask questions. We will ask the researchers to make note of any patterns, themes, issues to be addressed, opportunities for change/involvement and share with the team. {We will monitor the discussion and allow more time as needed}

Please take notes in your journal on and take pictures of the process throughout the PHOTO Analysis session.

Part 3- Selecting the Final Three

Total Time 45 minutes

You will meet 1-on-1 with each researcher, again, to discuss and help them narrow the collection to 3 photos. Ask them how sharing and getting team feedback made them feel, how seeing the photos from the team felt, do they think they know what their final 3 selected photos will be now? If they are feeling stuck, go through the worksheet grid again and push the discussion to be deeper. Let them know their photos have the meaning that they assign to them. They are creating knowledge that says who they are and what it's like to be them. Spend 7-10 minutes with each researcher.

Please monitor and make sure...

While waiting to meet with you the researcher should work on narrowing their collection and gather more feedback from others waiting to meet with a principal researcher.

After meeting with you, they should complete the Photo Narrative sheets for each of the 3 selected pictures. The narrative should be an expanded form of the worksheet. It should tell the story, literally, of the photo. Who, what, where, why, what it means, issues/opportunities... They will then title the photo and create a caption that will be posted beneath it.



PICTURE THE MAGIC PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Snapping Symbolic Pics

The objective of this session is to help our co-researchers understand how to convey a message in their photographs using symbolism.

Researchers will be able to

Capture a photo that symbolically represents a posed research question.

Analyze photos to derive symbolic meaning from the shot.

Demonstrate critical analysis and probing in group discussion of photo symbolism.

Exercise 1 (5 minutes)

Certain feelings will be easier expressed using symbolism, others will be easier photographed using real life or setting the scene. Ask a question to the group: when did you last feel very happy? Possible answers – a variety of recent or distant occasions

Now ask the group to write down the different things they associate with happiness. Some examples: People who are laughing, beautiful morning sunlight, flowers that are blooming, or being with all your family and friends.

Help them to draw the conclusion that instead of photographing happiness you can photograph things that make you think of happiness

Show slideshow of random photos, and explain the following as you click through the images:

A symbol is something that represents something else. It is important to always add context to your pictures, if not the viewer might give a different interpretation to your picture. People from different cultures and backgrounds may find different meanings. For example, colors, which can have a different meaning in one culture to another. People can also have their own highly personal symbols based on their unique personality and history. Questions to ask yourself while viewing these photos: When you see a particular image in a photograph, what does it remind you of? What different things do you associate with it?

Exercise 2 (10 minutes)

In this exercise you provide the group with some examples using reality and symbolism to express a concept. Ask your co-research a question, for example: “how would you feel if you entered a new school where you did not know anyone” The co-researcher may answer, “I would feel lonely”.

Break into 2 groups and have them depict loneliness (or the feeling that was shared) by arranging a scene and taking a photo. They can spread out and go into other spaces or outside to take the picture, but they only have 4 minutes to complete the task. Set a timer.

Once they take the photo, have them email it to info@magicblackgirls.com. We will use the emailed photos to show on the projector.

Group 1 – Demonstrate the scene and take photo by using symbolism (using object or something other than people)

Group 2 – Demonstrate the scene and take photo by using realism (using people)

Share the photos with the whole team. Ask the group if they see the concept of loneliness in the picture and explain to them why they chose the composition. Ask the group if they understand the difference between reality and symbolism in this example.

APPENDIX G: PHOTO ANALYSIS SESSION MATERIALS



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**PICTURE THE MAGIC- A photovoice project**

Photographer #: _____

☐ Subject Consent Form ☐ Private Property Consent Form

P	Describe your <i>picture</i> ?
H	What is <i>happening</i> in your picture?
O	Why did you take a picture <i>of</i> this?
T	What does this picture <i>tell</i> us about your experience as a Black woman?
O	What <i>opportunities</i> for improving your well-being or the community are revealed by this photo?



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PHOTOVOICE NARRATIVE 1

[illegible]

PHOTOVOICE NARRATIVE 2

[illegible]



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PHOTO Feedback Sheet

Name: _____ (You do not have to write your name if you do not want to.)

What was the most helpful or enjoyable thing in today's session?

What was the least helpful or enjoyable thing in today's session?

How did you feel about today's session overall? (Comfortable? Not comfortable? OK? Encouraged?)

Will you return to the next session? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Not sure

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thanks for your feedback!

Picture the Magic PHOTO Session Workshop

Research Refresher

Intro

You have committed to being a part of a major research project. The effort you put in will produce more than just pictures, you will be creating new knowledge about “what’s it like to be a Black girl?” To help you better understand your role as a researcher, let’s review some of the basics on research.

Group Discussion

In small groups or pairs have the co-researcher respond to the questions that follow. They may generate their own response or look up information.

What is research?

Why is it done?

What are some of the ways research is conducted?

After small group breakout, allow groups to share responses and include whether the response was their own or one they found. If not mentioned, add to the discussion review of research fundamentals (e.g. scientific method, observation, articles, interviews, questionnaires, case studies, objectivity, statistics, and misuse of data).

Research & the Black Community

Provide overview of the history of medical research conducted on Black bodies. Show clip from Tuskegee experiment documentary and Marion Sims. Have the co-researchers take a few minutes to write down their reaction to the clips and then discuss. Be sure to allow and encourage the processing of the emotions they may experience.

Black Feminist Thought

Present the major concepts of Black feminism with emphasis on the making of meaning and defining Black woman and girlhood by Black women and girls. This is why we are doing the Picture the Magic Photovoice project—to create understanding about what it’s like to be Black girls. Pose the closing discussion and have each person respond to the group.

Closing question: How do you feel about research now?

Picture the Magic PHOTO Session Workshop

Closing Activities

Purpose

Guide the researchers in evaluating the project and discussing ways to apply the findings in the world around them.

Bullet-proof Reflections

Each person will write down in bullet point format: What are your biggest take-aways from the research project? What would you like to contribute to MBG in the future? What's it like to be a Black girl?

Mold-y Expressions

Provide the co-researchers with play-doh or other clay-like modeling substance to create an expression of something they taking away from Picture the Magic. Use the following instructions: "Mold something out of your play-doh that reflects one of your take-aways (a specific thing you learned and can apply) from the project?"

Close-knit Compliments & Bright Ideas

Toss say something nice (or that you enjoyed/learned/appreciate), toss the yarn, catch the yarn say something nice about the person who tossed it & the project, repeat.

Once everyone has the yarn in their hands, repeat the process but share any ideas that you have on how to turn the research themes into interventions (activities or programs). Describe the types of things you desire to support you as Black girls. Pass the yarn to the next person who has an idea sparked by what was just shared.

When everyone has shared as many ideas as possible, pause to look at the connections made between ideas [Note: A facilitator should take notes on the ideas shared].

Review the notes from the Close-knot activity with whole group. Allow the group to write any additional ideas or to elaborate on the ideas expressed.

Group Discussion

Lead group in discussion of the ideas, noting which ideas appear to be favored. Take a vote (or several) to narrow the ideas to ten or fewer. Do another round of discussion and voting until the group agrees that ideas are what they desire collectively.

Picture the Magic PHOTO Session Workshop: Identity

Intro

In the world of academia (higher education), there are these ideas that researchers like ourselves have created and developed them into theories. Theories are ideas or set of ideas that explain how or why something happens, should happen or needs to happen. Researchers set out to explore, prove or disprove theories. There are often many different versions of theories that aim to explain the same thing from their own perspective.

A popular theory about how people of color, specifically Black people, developed their sense of ethnic or racial identity was created in the 1970's by Cross. His idea was that Black people progress (and sometimes revert) through stages of awareness of the social identity of being Black. *Provide Cross Theory or other relevant theory summary.*

Why do you think that I shared this information with you? Well, it is a big part of what you are going through right now in life and may have been intensified for some of you as you have gone through this experience. But our identity is not just about the way our skin or hair looks. There are many other social identities. We talked about this briefly before. Who remembers some of the social identities that we have? [Ability, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.]

Let's do a dive a little deeper into our own identities.

Activity

Identity Markers

Purpose: This is an excellent activity for group bonding and identity examination. As it can get pretty emotional and involves sharing rather personal facets of themselves, it's best done with a group that has already established a level of comfort with one another.

Instructions: Prior to participant arrival, hang up signs around the room with space for people to move near. Each sign should list one of the following words: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, first language, religion, body size/shape, physical ability, mental illness, socioeconomic status, education, and age. Feel free to add or change identity markers to fit your group.

To play, ask the group to move closest to the identity that resonates the most with them as you read a series of statements one-by-one.

Here are some suggested statements:

- This is the identity that I know the most about.
- This is the identity that I know the least about.
- This the identity I tend to keep hidden
- This is the identity that I most like to share with others
- This is the identity that I have the most in common with the majority of my friends
- This is the identity that I am most unsure of how to talk about.
- This is the identity that I think most people judge me by.
- This is the identity that brings me the most joy.
- This is the identity that brings me the most pain.
- This is the identity that I believe is the most important to me right now, in this room.

After reading each statement, ask volunteers (ideally representing multiple identity categories) to share why they settled on that identity marker. Sharing their specific identities- such as their religion or mental illness diagnosis – is optional.

Other questions to consider: What was it like to have to choose only one identity from around the room? Did anyone's selection surprise you at any point?